

products; alone, this interest is not large enough to amount to much. There are a few high and dry old protectionists, who are trying to make commerce run up hill and desire to check commerce with Canada, much of which is in our own latitude, and substitute trade with Patagonia, but the practical argument would soon eliminate these. The successful enemies of reciprocity with Canada are the American lumber and wood pulp interests."

A GREAT STRIKE IN 1883.

Eighteen years ago to-day was declared a strike of labor, which for a month paralyzed the business of the country, and, perhaps, in the history of the North American continent has been unequalled in its disturbing effect on commerce except by the present contest which the Amalgamated Association (Organized Labor) is waging in the steel works, etc., of the United States. My purpose was, as indicated in an article furnished you in 1893 on the subject, to take up and discuss the effect of the Telegraphers' strike upon Telegraphy as a profession, judging it in the light of history. I find the subject has widened into many channels.

The progress of electrical science; the almost universal use of the typewriter as an adjunct of telegraphic work; the vast increase in the employment of women in the service, and many other, but minor matters of issue have made it difficult to include within the limits of an article, suitable for your columns, all material matter pertaining to his subject.

I find a very wide difference of opinion as to the general results of the strike upon the character of the profession generally; but on one point—on two points, to be specific—there is a general agreement:—The *morale* of the profession is distinctly better; the remuneration is as distinctly reduced.

Now these two matters of fact involve direct conclusions: the large increase of women among operators has undoubtedly led to decreased remuneration; but the typewriter is yet more directly responsible for this change. Operators, who because of poor penmanship could never hope to get out of small or comparatively unimportant situations, now flood the country, and I fancy that to this "improvement" more than to any other cause, is due the decreased earning capacity of the telegrapher. The conclusion is, therefore, that while the moral tone of the profession has been enhanced by the development of the woman-telegrapher, she has, with the aid of the typewriting machine, made the profession one affording but a precarious living for the male member engaged in the business.

I have already, in the papers written for the MONETARY TIMES in July, 1893, expressed my opinion of the move as a labor rebellion on a most chimerical pretext. It sent out on strike on July 19th, 1883, some 15,000 or 20,000 telegraphic employees in the United States and Canada, and well nigh paralyzed commerce. The telegraphers, it should be remembered, were organized as a branch of the Knights of Labor, and their designation was "District 45 K. of L." What they struck for then was pretty much what employees in other directions are striking for to-day, namely, recognition of the organization as a body, whose leaders were to be treated with by employers. The "Bill of Grievances" of 1893, did not ask for this, however, but asked for shorter hours; equal pay for the two sexes; and 15 per cent. higher pay all round. The Western Union Company conceded part of what was asked, but refused to recognize District 45 K. of L. Roger J. Mullin of Toronto was the moving spirit of the strike in Canada, assisted by a very active man in Montreal. The telegraph companies remained firm in their attitude of refusal to recognize the Knights of Labor, and by 15th August the strike was announced by the strikers themselves to have failed.

Now to sum up what was the outcome of this remarkable ebullition. The strike resulted in these direct benefits to the telegraphers:

- Regular hours of labor;
- Pay for overtime at rate of salary;
- No compulsory Sunday labor;
- A better moral tone, and cleaner offices.

But as every rose carries its thorn, so these benefits, great in the aggregate, have led to cheaper labor, enhanced by the vicious "waiting list" now a characteristic feature of all important offices, where applicants for a job must wait their turn. This is a cleverly devised scheme by which a man secures employment at the pleasure of the Manager; works at the pleasure of the Chief Operator, or Traffic Chief, and is paid only for the actual hours of duty performed. It has had its part in cheapening telegraphic labor, but I have called it vicious for a thoroughly different reason. It is a direct encouragement to the "floater," who works here and there as the wind blows and fancy pleases for a

grub-stake, and transportation to the next important town on his list.

There is a sort of moral vagrancy about this, which not infrequently leads to evil results, to dissipation and worse, not to mention that in its use there is opportunity for much abuse of the individual rights of the "extra" man, because it is generally assumed that if he possesses any such rights, he must keep them cleverly concealed. In this connection I have no reference either to this present locality nor to conditions existing across the border.

I do not see any prospects, or even possibilities of another telegraphers' strike. If one comes, however, it will be many years from now; though we must not forget the extremely rapid growth of the old organization of 1880 or thereabout and its prompt action taken when "all were in" whom it were possible to bring in by any means. The atmosphere has cleared so far as one may judge from present appearances, and left the situation baldly clean.

I deduce that the occupation of a telegrapher, while a most enticing profession, is not one to recommend a youth starting in life to take up.

J. H. McN.

Buffalo, N.Y., 19th July, 1901.

LEATHER PRICES.

As mentioned last week, the tanners and others interested in things appertaining to leather, have been holding meetings in Toronto, to discuss prospects, prices and the general situation. So far as they went, the meetings were very satisfactory. No intention was either expressed or intended of forming anything like a combination; the idea was merely to get the representatives of the trade together, to talk over matters in friendly fashion, to rub off angular excrescences, and, in short, to become better acquainted. These objects were, we are credibly informed, carried out to the letter. People in the leather trade now know where they stand better than they did a week or so ago.

One tangible result of the meeting and dinner at the Rossin House last Friday is a general advance of from 8 to 10 per cent. in the prices of Spanish sole, slaughter, and harness leather. Of course, the prices now set down are by no means obligatory. One man may offer his goods at these prices and his offer be accepted, and another may be refused. But there is a generally firmer feeling prevailing, and prices no doubt will gradually be levelled up to these figures. There can be but little doubt that for some time past, prices have been too low, considering general trade conditions and the cost of raw material and of labor.

In the meanwhile, business is above the average in Manitoba and the North West Territories, and there is also a very fair demand locally for almost all lines of leather. The demand from England for sole leather and splits also is particularly good, and they are realizing good prices in car load lots. Indeed, one very unusual feature is the fact that exports in this line to the old country are bringing very nearly as good prices as if sold at home. During the last four or five years fairly large quantities of sole leather have been exported, but this was due to the fact that the output here was so large that it was necessary to ship away the surplus, the English market, however, being generally considered a slaughter market, no more than ordinary profits were realized or looked for. Even French calfskins were sometimes to be obtained cheaper in London than in Paris. Latterly, however, as above mentioned, the profits have been very satisfactory, with the result that stocks here have been kept at a lower ebb than for a long time past. All this makes the prospects for leather men distinctly bright.

AN UP-TO-DATE NURSERY

In the County of Hants, Nova Scotia, a fruit district lying south of the Basin of Minas, an enterprising industry flourishes, as described by the Kentville Advertiser. It is the Newport Nursery, started some years ago by J. J. Salter, "an enthusiastic young man of that place, who believed, thoroughly, that fruit growing in Nova Scotia was yet in its infancy, and prophesied it would become the leading product of our fertile farms." He was able to interest local capitalists in his venture, Mr. J. Keith, vice-president of Commercial Bank, is president of the Newport Nursery Co. Mr. A. P. Shand is one of the largest shareholders. The Company has 50 or 60 acres set out in young apple and pear trees, besides small fruits and ornamental trees; and has 150 acres more looking to its future use for like purposes. Not only do the Company's agents sell trees in Nova Scotia, but in Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick, and Mr. Salter intends to push into Maine this year. The concern is well conducted, the premises fenced with wire, traversed by good roads planted with shade trees. Good buildings also afford necessary storage and shelter and office room.