STRIKING RESULTS ANALYZED.

The Gains to Labor From Strikes Far Outweigh the Losses.

THE END JUSTIFIES THE MEANS.

A Comprehensive Review of the Labor Problem by Commissioner Peck of New York—Statistics and Deductions.

Labor Commissioner Charles F. Peck has just submitted his fifth annual report of the bureau of statistics of labor to the New York legislature. The following is a condensed summary.

In the introductory chapter the commissioner says:

"A brief retrospect of the acts passed during the one hundred and tenth session of the legislature of this state serves not only to set before us the amount of attention given to the labor interests during the year 1887, but to recall to us how much had been done previously.

"These acts include laws, either original or amended, for the arbitration of difference between employers and employes; for cooperative savings and insurance funds; for public industrial drawing schools, day or evening; for a mechanics' wage lien; for inspection and supervision of tenements and lodging houses; for protection of women and children employes; for free libraries; public holidays and half-holidays; checking competition by convict-made goods; for securing to workmen the right to membership in labor organizations; for extending and securing liens for wages; for regulating factories; for protecting messenger boys' morals; for enforcing the observance of the Sabbath; for limiting hours of labor on surface railroads, and for other related purposes; at all of which, it is safe to say, that a generation ago there would have been an outcry and protest for pernicious activity and interference with the sacred rights of capital, against which a man might not lift his hand and live.

"Some of these acts are original; others are amendments or extensions of laws previously passed, but which on trial were found not to work satisfactorily. It goes almost, without saying that much of this legislation is tentative. It is plowing up new ground, and is in many respects against the traditions. It is to be expected that blunders will be made, and that now and then persons with 'axes to grind' may misdirect the legislator enthusiastic in the cause of humanity. These are, however, trifles, and will settle down with time. It is enough that the spirit of the age is in favor of the worker and that the laborer is held worthy of something more than his wages hire, inasmuch as he is also a valuable helper in the building up and maintenance of society and its institutions.

WORK OF THE BUREAU.

"Hitherto the inquiries of this bureau have been detached, dealing with special callings and their incidents. This has been in some measure from the necessity of the case and the limits of our expenditure. In homely language, 'the coat has been cut according to the cloth.'

"My first report for 1883 was necessarily brief. It included the results of an inquiry into the prison contract labor system. The report for 1884 included 1 An inquiry into factory and child labor, with an appendix on the maladies incident to trades. 2. The general and trade education of factory laws in various states of the union and in Great Britain. 3. An account of a visit to the city of Pullman, Ill., by the several state commissioners of labor statistics.

"In my report for the year 1885 I treated the questions of woman and child labor, long hours and the homes of the working people, especially the tenement houses; foreign cheap labor, strikes, boycotting, labor organizations their uses and methods.

"In my report for 1886 I dealt with the subject of apprenticeship and the expediency of making provision, social and legislative, for the continuation and succession of our native born artisans and skilled mechanics—a question which I regard more earnestly than ever, as of vital importance to our country, and our institutions; the immigration of adult skilled labor into this country, involving, as I believe, great and imminent peril to our social and commercial relations, of which we have had ample evidence during the past year. As an accompaniment to the apprenticeship chapter I presented a view of manual training.

"I have heard from many quarters on the subject and the chord struck in Albany vibrated in the education board of New York city, which determined to give manual training a trial in some of the schools under their control, with a view to extending its utilization if found satisfactory. The strikes of 1886 received attention, and were special subjects of inquiry, especially the great street car strikes, the famous cigarmakers' strikes, the Troy laundries strike and the knit goods strike, affecting eighty-six factories and 20,000 hands. Besides these strikes, there was a chapter of boycotts and the law of boycott with tables of the strikes, numbers engaged and results.

"The report for the year 1887 treats of the strikes, their causes and consequences.

"There are special articles on the coal and longshoremen's strikes, which formed the subject of legislative investigation.

"The trade disturbances of 1887, though not so important as those of 1886, have been quite numerous. Their cause and consequences, have been very prominent subjects in compelling the attention which labor interests have received in recent years.

"The result of strikes," says the commissioner, "is a most important subject. The handicraftsman or laborer lives through his wages. No work, no wages. No wages, no food, no lodging, either for himself or those dependent on him. It must be a great and strong motive indeed which impels a man to suspend work and cut himself off from wages. He often makes a mistake, but he is terribly in earnest. He proves it by self-sacrifice, the sharpest test of faith and principle, if not of judgment and prudence. Even when the striker gets assistance from his organization, it is only a relief, not a wage, not equal to his needs, but only to help him tide over obstacles and discomforts.

"Strikes have helped to raise wages, to shorten hours, to improve the condition, not only of the particular workmen who have risen up in protest, but also of the masses. A strike in a particular shop for reasonable cause often ends in general improvement. Bakers have reduced their hours from eighteen to about twelve. The nine-hour day is due to the strike system. Wages in whole trades have gone up from 10 per cent to 30 per cent because the men in particular shops have asserted themselves and made good their claim to consideration. Even a 'lost' strike is not always a dead loss. It may carry with it the promise and potency of betterment in some other way. Then the employer does not feel the pinch of a strike in his own home, his food, his clothes, as do his workpeople; but the employer has bills to meet, rent to pay, and other causes for anxiety, and he cannot be indifferent to a stand-still of a great business; even if a strike be unsuccessful, it brings to mind that what has happened may happen again, and may be repeated with worse effect; with the fear of another strike before his eyes, the task-master may feel compelled to do tardy justice. The majority of employers, to their honor be it said, are in pleasant relations with their workpeople. They are willing to pay what the trade will afford, as they understand it. There is strong competition between business men, while between wage-earners there is not much competition except for the newcomers. A notable 'result' attained by strikes and organization is a tendency to establish fixed rates from one season to another. One of the points debated and not yet settled, is whether the uniform wages is to the profit of the trained and thoroughly competent and reliable workman. It is said that there is no law against an employer paying a man extra for his extra good work, but it is more exact, perhaps, to say, that such a man is always sure of employment and gets his quota of the general advancement."

Commissioner Peck says "that in the Strike Relief Fund, we find a strong and interesting proof of the solidarity that exists among the workingmen. Unions not only assist their own members, but they make loans and advances to each other just as great capitalists in stress of circumstances are said sometimes to do; though possibly capitalistic beneficence is less from sympathy than from mutuality in the presence of a common danger. The unions stand together to defend a principle and make heavy sacrifices for the cause.

"The value and significance of trade organization to which the strike, as the protest in action, is the necessary accompaniment, are shown positively in the advancement of the workingman, negatively in the non-advancement of the workingwoman. In the cigar trade, in which the women are paid the same rate of wages for the same class of work, the women have been sharers in the general improvement resulting from combined action. In the textile trades, where men and women stand on the same plane, they have got their share of such advancement as has resulted from general action. Even in the subdivisions of the sewing industries, where men and women work together, tailors for instance, women get some share of the general good, which, small as it may be, is, at any rate, equitable. But in other industries which are given over to women exclusively, and in which there is no organization, the wages are at the lowest notch and it is a ceaseless struggle against starvation.

"Whether the strike should be an incident of our competitive system is not worth arguing. It is with us, and it has its value, although the right of resistance or self-assertion may be occasionally abused through excess of zeal or personal ambition.

"Every one is aware that by the increase of machine power and the progress of applied science, an immense increase of production has been achieved in this century to the great gain in the comforts of life for mankind at large. But it is not generally known that by improvements in machinery and manufacturing processes the increase of production still proceeds and, in a ratio, even surpassing that which has heretofore been accomplished in equal periods of time. Thus it is alleged that in Great Britain alone, which may be said to be wholly dependent on her commerce, her manufactures and her minerals, the increase of productions has, through mechanical improvements, in some cases amounted to 20 per cent in the last two years. I have no means of verifying such a broad allegation, but all who take note of the course of trade and mechanical enterprise must know that prodigious strides have been made in manufactured products even within two years, and that the work still goes on. Every day we hear or read of something new in the way of invention or combination by which the profits of capital may be increased and the use of human labor reduced. In such case it is self-apparent that the laborer stands justified in agitating for shorter hours and better wages as his share of the general increment, and of course when he has won his better position he must continue to use all lawful and honorable means to hold it.

CONSPIRACY LAW.

"Conspiracy and combination to attain or prevent a certain result are almost interchangeable terms, their differentiation being found in the almost intangibly fine hair of 'legality.' Thus the laborers, who combine to raise wages and to prevent certain persons from carrying on business operations on principles injurious to the interests of the masses, would at first sight seem to be on an equal footing with the capitalists who enter into combinations, for the purpose of maintaining or enhancing prices, or for the purpose of getting their goods and commodities at the least possible risk to themselves, and crushing out unreasonable demands of the wage-earners.

"A section of this report has been given to a careful and impartial analytic inquiry into the history of combinations to maintain or advance wage rates, and the origin and condition of the law bearing on that subject. The open or secret protest of the laborer in support of what he considers his right to fair subsistence out of the product of his skill and energy is no modern idea, it is as old as history. The difference between the present and the past is that formerly the peasant and the workman had recourse to violence and brute force, whereas, in these days they seek to effect the betterment of their condition by combination, or by refusal to work, thereby keeping capital inert and unproductive. The laborer's right to sell his one commodity, skill and force, at the highest price in the best market, is freely conceded by the capitalistic economist. But it is not generally admitted that the laborers have a right to unite and combine in such mode as would compel the capitalist to hire labor at its own price. Labor has simply an option to refuse to work and so to starve; but it is not clear to what extent discontent may go or at what point lawful negation becomes illegal action. On the other hand, it would seem that the capitalists, employers or producers, may not only lie idle, but may enter into agreements with each other to restrict production, to raise or depress prices and to impose their law on the whole community. This was not always the case; it was once accounted illegal to artificially raise or depress prices by concerted action, just as it was accounted an offense to artificially raise wages, though they might be, and often were, depressed by law. In these latter days it would seem that labor and capital should be equal before the law.

CONDUCT OF STRIKERS.

"Much change has taken place within the last two years in the manner of ordering and conducting strikes. Many of the labor organizations have revised their rules governing trade difficulties. This is made very plain by an examination of their constitution and by-laws. Indeed, some of them have gone so far as to wholly rescind obstructive rules, and insert provisions in their laws which prevent the use of what they term 'shop calls.' Formerly it was the custom to stop work and consider the matter in dispute during working hours. Now, when found necessary to discuss a grievance, the subject is postponed until after the day's work has been performed, and sometimes the whole matter is discussed outside of their shop altogether. This has been a frequent cause of annoyance to employes themselves, since they had to lose the time consumed in settling the matter in dispute. In shops where a large number of men are employed it will readily be seen that even half an hour taken off the individual worker's time forms no inconsiderable tax upon the employer, and is an unnecessary sacrifice on the part of the employe. These abuses do no exist in any of the old organizations, as provision is made for such contingencies by the creation of what are termed executive committees. Where the latter do not exist it is the duty of some paid official to reconcile differences and prevent, as far as possible, the suspension of work.

GAINS BY STRIKES.

"An attempt was made last year to give the possible gains accrued by strikers. The figures furnished at that time only had reference to strikes into which the question of wages entered, although all strikes indirectly affect wages, but the data were very meager, and as stated at the time, there was no attempt to cover the whole field. The trade which furnished the largest result was that of the carpenters. The gains accruing to that trade are not to be limited to the figures presented in last year's report, for it is evident that the workers in that branch of the building industry have kept on adding to their account during the year 1887, so that in order to give the strikers full credit the gains of 1887 should be added to those of 1886. This applies also to the bricklayers, who went on strike in 1884. No strike of any importance is reported in that trade for the past year, and yet they have continued working at the advance secured in 1885. Thus they also should be credited with two years' increase in their annual earnings. The consideration of the subject in this phase will go far towards excusing some of the seemingly foolish strikes which it becomes the province of the bureau to report, and would seem to prove the truth of the statement made by members of the labor organizations that the benefits of a strike are not to be measured by the mere gain in wages for the time being. Indeed, many advocates of labor organizations go further than this and assert, as before mentioned, that even an unsuccessful strike is not a loss, since it prevents the possibility of a reduction in the near future.

"From the tables of the building departments of New York and Brooklyn, it is plain to be seen that the improvement in working hours and workingmen's wages, which was denounced by alarmists as likely to result in the injury of trade, has not realized these gloomy anticipations.

"A reference to the report of 1886 shows that in New York city 3,697 buildings were proposed, with estimated value $53,604,648. This number was for ten months, the return being made up to October 31—ten months.

"The return for the year, November 1, 1886 to October 31, 1887, in New York city shows 4,376, with an estimated cost of $68,073,157. This being for the full year it is necessary to deduct two months of time and one-sixth of the cost to equalize the period, the buildings and the outlay, the result being:

"New buildings, 4,376, less one-sixth, 729, equals balance 3,647, omitting fraction, estimated cost $68,073,157 less one-sixth, leaving $56,727,631, as the buildings and cost for ten months of 1887, showing over three millions increase.

"In Brooklyn permits were granted from November 1, 1886, to October 31, 1887, for 4,242 new buildings, at a cost of $20,007,028.

"The return used in our last report covered only ten months—buildings 3,484, value $19,143,742.

"After deducting two months or one-sixth time and one-sixth cost the result is 3,735 buildings and cost $16,505,857, showing nearly six millions increase.

"These points may yet form an interesting topic for inquiry as illustrating the gains and losses by strikes. In the two trades that have been specially mentioned it will be found, by reference to the bureau reports for the past two years, that the disbursed cost of a strike, and even the grand total, which includes the loss of wages, bears but a small proportion to the increase made and held.

HOURS OF LABOR.

"Strikes for the regulation of hours of labor during the past year have not been as frequent as formerly. The collapse of the nine hour movement in May, 1885 seems to have had a deterring effect upon the movement and the attempts to reduce hours of labor during the past year were confined to special industries, such as waiters and bakers, with a few others."

"Strikes as an open expression of discontent and a serious interruption to business, still continue to occupy a large part of the bureau's time and attention. The frequent and protracted suspension of useful and profitable labor is a serious fact under ordinary conditions of trade, but the addition to their number by the strike, as a measure for redress of grievances or increase of gain, is a very important feature in modern labor history. A strike implies strong sense of trouble which cannot be adjusted by calm discussion and appeal to equity.

"If a strike succeeds it is quite certain that war might have been avoided by timely concession. It is not by any means clear that the non-success of a strike proves it to have been based on insufficient or unreasonable cause. It only establishes the conclusion that it was hasty or ill-advised. Young organizations are anxious to try their wings, and are apt to disregard prudence; old organizations, who have been through the mill, adopt the strike only as an extreme measure, after negotiation and reconciliation have been tried and have failed. Any petty disagreement may seem good cause for making display of newly-acquired power by the young organization, but the experienced body is satisfied to threaten and take measures to make success certain. They know the strike should not be resorted to except as a heroic remedy in an extreme case, where all palliatives have failed.

"The strikes for 1887 include 144 trades and callings, against 137 in 1886; the number of shops on strike amounted to 1,604, against 2,061 shops in 1886. This, however, does not give an exact reflex of the work performed by the bureau in this direction, as 2,212 labor troubles were investigated. Many of these, upon inquiry and investigation, were found to come under the head of threatened strikes. Others never got beyond a simple demand for an advance or a mild protest against a reduction of wages. As a consequence no figures could be obtained regarding them and the facts are only stated to show the undercurrent of dissatisfaction which is always running, but owing to the lack of organization among the workers in the unskilled trades in which most of these troubles occur, it lacks direction. These cases, however, require as much work, and often more trouble some and expensive than real strikes, as they require the presence of a special agent. The returns for the past year show 694 strikes successful, 190 compromised or partly successful, three doubtful, 695 unsuccessful and twenty-two pending. The returns for 2,061 shops reported on strike, during the year 1886, show 751 successful, 426 compromised or partly successful, 212 doubtful, 524 unsuccessful and 147 pending. The number of workers engaged in strikes was 51,731; from this number, however, must be subtracted 1,095 workers, who were engaged in what are termed "threatened strikes," where there is very slight, if any, suspension of work. This would make the actual number in strikes 50,736. Eight thousand one hundred and seventy-six strikers were refused work after strike. The loss of wages incident to strikes was $2,013,229.45. The amount expended by labor organizations in relief and conduct of strikes was $217,069.78. Estimated gain in wages for one year to 11,472 persons, $944,632.55. Loss to employers, $1,102,576.70.

"For the year 1886, the results were as follows: Number of workers engaged in strikes, 127,332, of whom 6,391 were refused work after strikes; the loss of wages was $2,552,554. Amount expended for relief and conduct of strikes by labor organizations was $329,080. Estimated gain in wages in 771 shops, $1,420,885 per annuam, benefitting 34,832 persons. Loss to employers from all causes, $1,644,812.

"Of these figures, it may be observed that the 'loss to employers' is probably overstated, if taken as an absolute, irrecoverable loss. Oftentimes the employer has set down a "lost contract" as an item of damage by reason of a strike. The only loss sustained in such a case being really the loss of hoped-for gains. Where the strike for an advance in wages is successful, it is clear that the employer's loss could only be upon contracts already in progress and in which an increase of outlay involves a corresponding decrease of calculated profits. Inasmuch, however, as strikes for wages usually take place at the beginning of the business season, the employer has to make his contract bids or selling prices square with the altered conditions. When work is already begun and a demand for advance is sprung upon the employer, it is not to be denied that loss may be entailed; but this also follows on a rise in the value of commodities or materials, due to causes outside of the relation of employer and employed, and for which a man of prudence and foresight will have made his calculations as one of the chances to which every business transaction is liable.

"On the other side, under the head, 'Loss of Wages,' it is well to remark that this loss is by no means absolute. It is possible that the worker may be entirely thrown out of occupation and may have to subsist on savings from the past or on union allowances and assistance from sympathizing fellow-workers. It very often happens, however, that the strikers in one shop may get work in another shop in the very same city, much more in other cities. This, therefore, may turn out a change of employers rather than a loss of wages.

"To what extent a dearth of employment has attended on a particular strike it has not been passible to discover. In some trades where the minor branches of a handicraft are easily acquired it has been a diversion of trade from skilled to unskilled hands, the unskilled soon picking up the wage-earning aptitude. Again, almost every trade has its dull and its busy season and "loss of wages" may in that case be made up by prolongation of the season or by extra hours of work. Sometimes, indeed, it happens that the season slips away and nothing done, and then the loss is irreparable.

"The extent and importance of the strikes of 1887 have not been so great as those of some previous years. The building trades are bound together by a community of interests, and are naturally sympathetic; they are also made up chiefly of tool-handlers and not of machinery-handlers; their condition in any season may be accepted as an indication of the movements in all the constructive trades. The heaviest strikes in the building interest during the past year are those of the carpenters and framers. They show totals of 2,414 and 1,586, together $4,000 men with loss in wages of $49,036.31, $26,262.75 and $13,903, to the organizations, of which the strikers were members. It will be noted that the bureau has introduced a column into the tables showing the annual gain in wages resulting from the present sacrifice of ready money, by which, if individuals lose, it is for the eventual good of the trade. In these cases the loss in wages, etc., has resulted in a prospective annual gain of $364-714.

CAUSES AND RESULTS OF STRIKES.

"The causes and results of strikes," remarks Commissioner Peck, "are a vitally important detail of information, setting forth in brief the matters in difference between the parties to the wage contract. The causes are various. They are either aggressive or defensive, but they go to show the homogeneousness of ideas in the several trades, and unity of principal of action. The causes of strikes are either to establish trade usages, to increase wages, or to protect against neglect and arbitrary infraction of recognized rules; sometimes a strike is the overt expression of disapproval against objectionable persons or practices in a shop. Sometimes a strike may be for more than one cause.

"The most notable causes are for increase of wages or against reduction of wages; for the reduction of hours and regulation of shop usages are important to the worker, while insistance on the employment of union men and objection to non-unionists concern the integrity of the associative principles. While the number of strikes, merely "to assist other trades" in their troubles, attests the solidarity of the workers.

"The causes as returned by answers are: Abolition of piece work, 2; change of pay day, 3; discharge of union men, 11; discharge of employes, 5; discharge of foreman, 2; employment of non-union men, 113; equalization of wages, 3; increase of hours, 9; increase of wages, 469; increase of wages and abolition of payment in saloons, 42; increase of wages and reduction of hours, 55; increase of wages and union rules, 41; increase of wages, etc., 15; miscellaneous, 33; non-payment of wages, 12; number of apprentices, 100; objectionable employes, 2; obnoxious fines, 6; obnoxious foreman, 7; obnoxious rules, 15; opposed to contract system, 2; opposed to Saturday night work, 2; opposed to use of wheel-barrows, 2; reduction of hours, 158; reduction of wages, 20; refusal to handle boycotted coal, 59; refusal to handle boycotted coal and freight, 34; refusal to handle boycotted freight, 25; refusal to handle boycotted patterns, 18; refusal to handle non-union material, 3; refusal to recognize Knights of Labor, 12; refusal to recognize Knights of Labor rules, 9; refusal to recognize union rules, 89; refusal to recognize union rules relative to hours of labor, 29; rival labor organizations, 8; Saturday half-holiday, 28; to assist other trades, 148; use of machinery, 4.

MODE OF SETTLEMENT.

"The bitterest quarrel must have its end, and it is well to know for future guidance what the end has been. Of the number of strikes reported and investigated it is found that 696 were "abandoned." This almost implies that they were hastily entered upon without due consideration as to the final chances of success. The lack of satisfactory results does not, however, conclusively establish the improvidence or precipitancy of the strike. It may have been undertaken when employers are strong and united, as in the silversmiths, and where the public customers are willing to wait, and so competition is not feared. The cause may seem stronger and better founded than it really is. In short, strikes, like other enterprises of faith and moment, are not to be gauged only by their successful issues. The modes of settlement are the familiar ones of arbitration, personal conciliation between parties engaged, or conciliation through labor organizations. The full figures are as follows:

"Arbitration, 6; 1 by the state board of mediation and arbitration, and 5 by the mayor of Rochester; conciliation, 21; conciliation with employes, 121; conciliation with labor organizations, 667; no formal settlement, 52; abandoned, 696; blank 41. The figures for 1886 were: Arbitration, 11—9 establishments engaged in general strike, and 1 shop strike by state board of arbitration, and 1 by state railroad commissioner; conciliation, 249; conciliation with employes, 81; conciliation with labor organizations, 832; no formal settlements, 20; abandoned, 430; blank, 386.

WAGES BEFORE AND AFTER STRIKES.

"The wage-rate is by far the most frequent cause of strikes, although, as we know, not the only one. In needless to dwell here on the importance of the wage-rate to the workingman. The proposition is a common place truism. When the employer gives in to an increase of wages, under the pressure of a strike, it is self-evident that he might have done so on the first request, as if only a matter of policy. One fact not recorded in this table is worthy of comment, viz: That the advanced rate continues for an indefinite period, say until a monetary crisis or some other derangement of business relations. Some economists are of the opinion that there is a general tendency in the rate of wages, as with the rate of interest, to decline. Whether this be so or not, it is certain that on the first symptom of falling trade, the producer cuts wages just as he cuts any other business expense, and that wages put down have a tendency to stay down. It is proverbial that wages are the first element to fall, and the last to rise in hard times. This has been shown over and over again, especially in the production of great staples. By the influence of organization, the rise in wages may also be looked upon as a permanent, not a transient gain. Moreover, there is a solidarity in the trades, and rates in one locality affect those in surrounding districts. The rate of advance is naturally variable in the several trades, but one trade (cigar makers) may be adduced as an example of conspicuous gain; gain, too, that seems likely to be retained, for with the wages go the hours, and a general improvement of working conditions.

"In the building trades, a slight advance is recorded in the case of carpenters. An important advance is that of the hod carriers, which seems just, for though rude labor, it requires the skill that comes from practice, and is moreover, exposed to the stoppages incident to open-air constructive work.

"The horseshoers, entirely limited to manual labor, have secured an important advance.

"The longshoremen, whose labor, although rude, implies a good deal of skill in the handling of heavy packages (indeed all labor, even the roughest, implies skill), have succeeded in obtaining a partial advance in night work. This trade, which is almost always irregular, dependent on the arrival of vessels, is one of those in which the seeming liberality of pay, by the hour or the day, does not indicate the week's earnings. There are a great many hours wasted in waiting for a job.

"During the year ending November 1, 1887, the number of establishments reported as affected by strikes relating to wages was 1,124. In 394 the employes secured an increase, fifty reported a decrease and 660 stated that there was no change. For the year 1886 the report was: Number of establishments affected, 991, of which 596 obtained an increase, fifteen suffered a decrease and 146 reported that there was no change from previous year.

HOURS BEFORE AND AFTER STRIKES.

"One of the salient topics of modern trade agitation is the length of the working day. Many workers can recall the time when, in most trades, twelve hours was a short day, 6 till 6, while in very many others fifteen hours was not enough to satisfy the cupidity of capital, and in some there were no hours at all—work began must be finished. In two or three trades (bakers, barbers and waiters, for instance,) there are still some specimens extant of this last and worst position, but happily they are dying out.

"Short hours have been the ground of sharp contest in latter years, and in most constructive trades nine or ten hours are an established rule, although the agitation has not quite subsided, and in trades where machinery has to be tended as in the great industrial operations, the shifts are apt to be uncertain, perhaps necessarily. In the bakers' trade great progress has been made. Out of 909 inquiries regarding strikes, in which the question of hours of labor was involved in that number of establishments, 733 report no further change this year, while 131 report a decrease and 22 report an increase either to the normal standard or under special conditions. One hundred and eighty-one persons obtained employment through the reduction of hours. In the year 1886, out of 256 strikes for reduction of hours, 74 were successful and 182 were lost. One thousand and eighty-three additional persons secured employment through the successful strikes. The great difference between the figures of 1886 and 1887 are due to the fact that in the former year strikes for shorter hours were more frequent and of greater proportion than in the latter one. This is especially true of the building trades in New York and Brooklyn, in which large numbers of men are employed.

SYMPATHETIC STRIKERS.

"The sympathetic strike is a topic often mentioned in the course of this inquiry. Its motives are various in their specific character, but may be summed up in the one general proposition of an interest common to all wage-earners; just as all merchants may have a common interest in some principle, and so give aid and comfort to a particular individual who is engaged in something that touches the general weal, for example, a dispute with the collector of customs or internal revenue.

"The strike to assist another trade, as it is termed, may be predicted on any cause, even in sympathy with what seems a case of injustice, though that is rare. Generally it may be presumed that there is some community of interest between the parties. What hurts A may thus react on Z. The modus operandi is frequently that if various trades are engaged in a common business, say in building the men in one trade strike on a specific grievance confined at first to their own calling, and then the others join in to sustain a general principle. This, of course, puts a pressure on the employer, who might otherwise have been able to get rid of the individual strikers' demand.

"These sympathetic strikes form a very important item in the general account. The total loss in wages being $97,583.69, while the loss to employers is placed at $95,000. Another instance of the 'solidarity' of the workingmen. Whether the loss to employers was absolute or relative, there are no means of knowing. The loss of a day to a mechanic is for the time being absolute. It is at best an investment for possible future gain.

"The following show the results in detail: Number of persons engaged, 5,220; number losing positions, 650; successful, 83; compromised or partly successful, 6; unsuccessful, 56; doubtful, 2; pending, 1. Total number of establishments affected, 148.

"For the year 1886, the results were as follows: Number of persons engaged, 10,905; number who lost positions, 223; loss in wages $28,737; loss to employers, $42,125; successful, 22; compromised or partly successful, 4; unsuccessful, 39; doubtful, 28, pending, 3. Total number of establishments affected, 96."

THREATENED STRIKES.

"The threatened strike," remarks the commissioner, "is often as effective as the actual strike. Indeed, where the employer refuses to concede reasonable demands and so avoid a strike, it is mostly because he does not believe in the strength or persistence of the employes to enforce their demands. In one trade, the bakers, as elsewhere told, the workmen did not feel justified in making open demand for redress of grievances, and so adopted the threatened strike system, breaking out in spots and earning wages while they sustained the few men on strike. The causes of threatened strikes, as will be seen, are the same as those of actual strikes.

"It need scarcely be said that employers show a wise discretion in avoiding the consummation of a threatened strike, where the employes are numerous and have the power of acting simultaneously, as in the case of the 'car employes,' whose strike is a great public inconvenience.

"Total number of threatened strikes seventy-one, involving 1,005 employes. In fifty-five cases they were successful, fifteen were unsuccessful, and one case was compromised. The number in 1886 was fifty-seven, resulting as follows: Successful, twenty-eight; compromised, eight; unsuccessful, ten, and eleven not reported."

WAGES LOST.

"The 'wages lost' or sacrificed by employes in their effort to secure a redress of their greivances or a betterment of their position in any way, must be accepted as at least conclusive of their earnestness. The sacrifice is enormous. It is a present and real loss and inconvenience for a future and doubtful good. When the sacrifice is for gain in money returns it is, in a measure, a mercantile transaction; an outlay from which a gainful return is expected. Even in that case, however, the risk and loss are not all incurred for the individual striker's own advantage onle, for it enures to the general good of all concerned in the trade, wherever located. The men engaged in the strike, who make the sacrifice, are not necessarily beneficiaries. Moneys in hand, the savings of labor, are voluntary paid out for a possible future good to the whole calling. Present earnings are refused, present privations incurred, by comparatively few, in the hope of a future good for the many. Forty thousand three hundred and forty-six wage-earners, in 998 establishments, voluntarily deprive themselves of $2,013,229.45, an average of 49.90 each, computed from the beginning to the close of the strike, besides which 606 make no report, of whom it is perfectly permissible to believe that they also had their share of present sacrifice, though the amount for reasons unexplained, is not given. In the year 1886 reports were received from ninety trades or callings, showing a loss of wages amounting to $2,538,554. Forty-seven trades made no report on the subject. It must be borne in mind that this self-taxation for a principle is quite voluntary. It is not the taxation by a government, imposed by a central power—it is a personal operation in which every individual can, and if he pleases, does have his say. It may not always be a work of wisdom, but it is proof of terrible earnestness, and when the loss is incurred in what is called the 'sympathetic' strike, it is a proof of unselfishness and the sense of special interest in the general welfare.

"The memoirs of the several strike movements show the particular causes for which these sacrifices were incurred. Here it is only necessary to call attention to the outlay and to say that the causes are as often matters of principle as of gain. Regulations as to apprentices, for instance, are more a question of principle affecting the future condition of a trade than the wages or gains of the present generation of workers. The brass-workers' great sacrifice hinged mainly on the Saturday half-holiday, a question of general good. The longshoremen's strike originated in sympathy with the grievances of laborers outside of this state, and was finally carried on to enforce what seemed to them the just claims of local labor.

"It is only to be regretted that the leaders and advisers in these acts of self-sacrifice have not always been the right men in the right places.

NUMBER REFUSED WORK AFTER STRIKES.

"In almost every strike, some persons, perhaps, on account of pernicious activity, suffer for the general good. This is especially observable in the case of 'unsuccessful' strikes. This table give the detail of workers who have lost employment on account of their participation in strike movements. Ninety-five trades or callings report that 8,176 persons lost positions; 49 trades do not report on this subject. For the year 1886, 76 trades or callings reported that 6,391 persons were refused work after strikes, and 61 trades failed to report."

COST OF STRIKES TO LABOR ORGANIZATIONS.

"Self-sacrifice is the most critical conjunctures accepted as a proof of sincerity. With that as a test, it cannot be questioned that the laborer is in earnest when he enters on a strike to enforce his view of right. The refusal to work under conditions which he thinks unfair to himself or his fellows, is a cogent proof of his sincerity and determination to defend his own rights or to help in asserting those of others. It is easy for a looker-on, or even for the employer, to condemn the laborer for throwing away his living in order to fight a battle in which victory is not always on the side of the right, and by which he must in any case suffer great present inconvenience for an uncertain future benefit.

"The amount of the laborer's direct loss has been shown in the summary 'loss of wages,' but the loss does not end there. The 'labor organizations,' formed to maintain and enforce the laborers' rights, have also their losses and sacrifices for the common good.

"T his table shows at a glance the total loss incurred by fifty-nine organizations, which have been on strike during the past year. The total cost amounted to $217,069.78. The details are found under the several trade titles. For the year 1886, forty-eight trades reported as to cost of strikes $329,080.

ESTIMATED GAINS.

In this table Commissioner Peck shows 'the estimated annual gains in wages in the several trades in which increase of wages was the main purpose of the strike. The cost of the strikes to attain their object can be found in another table. The totals in this case show from fifty-one trades engaged, the results being that 11,472 received an annual increase of $944,632.55, or $82 each.

"During the year 1886 the totals of forty-five trades were that 34,832 persons received an increase of $1,420,885, or $41 each.

"Strikes for the same cause were reported in the previous year, and it is only reasonable to suppose that the strikes were for the purpose of following up the advantages gained, and that those who had not already profited by the rise were seeking to equalize up.

"The 'wages' rate is the most important of all questions to the workingman, and it is the first and greatest cause of organization. Nor is the benefit resulting from agitation temporary in character; wages are maintained for years unless in case of trade or money crisis, when there is a general decline in value by which the wage-earner is the speedy sufferer with notoriously a very slow return. The results here shown, although few in comparison with the mass of wage-earners, may be accepted as typical, except that the great city of New York takes the lead as the class of work done and the abundance of capital.

"Besides, a few strikes took place in what are known as 'piece' trades. They proved successful, but it was found impossible to make any estimate of the gain to the strikers. It must be borne in mind that strikes 'against the employment of non-union men,' and several of the other causes enumerated, are after all only an attempt to preserve what is called the 'union scale,' as the table giving the wages before and after the strike will show that the non-strikers scale is lower than the demand made by the labor organizations. If a firm is permitted by the organization to employ non-union men or violate union rules or shop regulations, it will only be a question of time when all working in the shop will be forced to work for the lower or non-union rate, and this will spread to the entire trade. This may not be true of the new organizations which strike for causes that are trivial, but it is absolutely true of older organizations, which regard every infringement of rules or customs as tending to eventually reduce the rate of wages. Hence the persistence and vigor with which a strike apparently unimportant in itself, but really of grave moment to the trade in general, is pushed."

REFUSAL OF CONTRACTS AND THE LOSSES.

The questions cover the whole number of trades, and involve all transactions in the class of 'futures.' A feature of the replies would naturally be the number of negatives. Very many trades work from day to day for immediate delivery and consumption, 'spot' transactions, as it were. The building trade must be in the nature of work for a future date, so also with many manufacturing trades in which goods are made to be held over and delivered as called for or according to contract.

"The totals of answers from all classes of labor employers amount to 1,214, out of 1,604, of which 323 indicated that contracts had been refused by reason of labor troubles, while 405 having had no strikes had given no refusals, at least not on strike grounds.

"The other inquiry, 'loss by refusal of contracts,'" remarks the commissioner, "involves a little more critical examination. It is assumed, by the employer making the return, that his undertaking would surely have returned a profit. That is the object of all business and the specific purpose in the particular transaction. Putting aside the obvious contingency, that the contract, if undertaken, might have turned out a loss, partial or total, we will accept the reasonable probability with which every man undertakes a trade, that will turn out fairly well, in which case it only remains to add that there is reason to fear the trader may have occasionally returned the gross sum as a loss in place of returning the profits lost by his being prevented from entering on the transaction. A small, careless calculator will perhaps say that he lost $1,000, when the whole intended transaction only amounted to $1,000; whereas the careful man will say that he missed a deal by which out of $1,000 he might have netted $200 profit. Subject to this comment, it appears that 123 firms made $217,302 loss by their abandoned contracts, while 181 preferred to make no estimate of their misgains. In the year 1886 the loss from refusal of contracts was reported by 147 firms at $633,522."

NUMBER OF ESTABLISHMENTS CLOSED.

"This is a most important summary, and presents at a glance the suspension of industriss which takes place as an accompaniment to the strikes. If the policy and right reason of a strike are determined by the circumstances, it is also self-evident that the policy of resistance to a strike is open to the logic of facts and conditions. The strike is industrial war, and like other wars, is better avoided by wise concession than precipitated by rashness or obstinacy. The closing, or even the temporary suspension of a business establishment is a public as well as personal loss. The fact that 635 establishments closed and seventy-three partly closed, out of the whole number investigated, should be a sharp lesson to both parties in these issues. In the year 1886 there were 572 establishments reported closed.

"In speaking of discrimination against members of labor organizations the commissioner says, "that when an employer turns off an employe for a cause that affects the body of employes, and not for a cause personal, such as dishonesty or incompetency, it is looked on as an act of oppression, and the shop rises in his defense. The individual may perhaps have been active in promoting union interests, and so have become obnoxious to an employer. In that case his fellow-laborers rise up in his defense. It may so appear that an employer or his forman assigns a false cause for his dismissal, the real cause being that he is too earnest a unionist. This is called unjust "discrimination" and leads to strikes. The results have not been very conclusive; 844 have denied the impeachment, 834 have made no answer to the inquiry form, 310 no strike was answered, and in 171 the fact of discrimination was established. The results in 1886 were as follows: 152 firms reported that they did discriminate, 1,118 reported no discrimination, and 787 establishments made no report on this subject.

BREACHES OF THE PEACE AND ARRESTS.

"A satisfactory feature in our modern labor troubles is their avoidance of serious crime—a great contrast to the annals of years ago, particularly in other countries when labor disagreements were accompanied by riot and bloodshed. The arrests reported this year only amount to forty-eight for trivial causes, such as distributing boycot circulars, disorderly conduct, obstructing the sidewalk, etc; the fines and penalties, where imposed, being equally trivial. Only one case of actual violence was reported, which was followed by conviction and three years of state prison. Whether this arose out of the strike, or whether a case of previous animosity is not known. The total number of arrests in 1886 was 371; 248 for assault, 10 disorderly conduct, 1 for firing off a pistol, 35 for boycotting, 8 for conspiracy, 3 for blackmail, and 66 for various causes.

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