

DUBLIN STATISTICAL SOCIETY.

TRADES'
UNIONS AND COMBINATIONS

IN

1853.

A PAPER READ BEFORE

THE DUBLIN STATISTICAL SOCIETY,

ON MONDAY, MAY 16TH, 1853

BY

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THIS society was established in November, 1847, for the purpose of promoting the study of Statistical and Economical Science. The meetings are held on the third Monday in each month, from November till June, inclusive, at 8, P M. The business is transacted by members reading written communications on subjects of Statistical and Economical Science. No communication is read unless two members of the council certify that they consider it in accordance with the rules and objects of the society. The reading of each paper, unless by express permission of the council previously obtained, is limited to *half an hour*.

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The subscription to the society is one pound entrance, and *ten shillings* per annum.

Trades' Unions and Combinations in 1853. By T. E. Cliffe Leslie,
LL B.

GENTLEMEN,—Being desirous of obtaining authentic information with respect to the present character and prevalence of combinations among the working classes, I have endeavoured to possess myself of it by personal inquiry from persons who had the advantage, or disadvantage as it might be, of practical experience on the subject; and I have found it impossible to lay before you in half an hour both the results of my inquiry, and the conclusions they have suggested to my mind. I must, therefore, in this paper, present you with the evidence I have collected, without a report upon it; or, at least, I must follow the example of some parliamentary committees, and report only the evidence. Almost all the witnesses whom I shall introduce to you speak from personal experience, having come more or less frequently, in the course of business, into actual contact with the combinations of workmen. There is, however, one (and the only one whom it would be proper to particularise by name) whose observations upon the subject of my investigation I thought entitled to some notice in this paper, from a different reason than that which has led me to submit to your consideration the testimony of the other witnesses. The exception I refer to is the literary traveller Mr. Laing, whose statements and opinions deserve some attention on the part of this society, not only in consequence of his popularity as a writer, but because he travels and writes as a social inquirer.

In his work upon the social and political state of Denmark, published last year, the following passages amongst other similar ones occur:—"Socialism, communism, the rights of labour, and other theories in the improvement of the working man, which occupy and agitate the great body of artisans in this nineteenth century are in principle the same; and if carried into practical effect, must necessarily take the same shape as the incorporation system of the middle ages. The principle common to both is that skilled labour is a property acquired by the skilled labourer, and entitled to protection by law as well as land, cattle, or any other kind of property originally common to mankind. It is on this principle, and on this argument, that socialism, communism, and trades' unions are founded and defended by the operative classes; and in the social arrangements of the middle ages this principle was fully acknowledged and acted upon. Every workman in every trade was secured against the introduction of more competitors in the branch of industry in which he had acquired a right of property by his skill and labour, than could find a fair living in it. . . . This is the state now of all

trades or handicrafts in Denmark, and it is the state which the operative classes in London, Paris, Lyons, Manchester, and all the capitals of manufacturing industry desire to introduce, as the sole remedy for the fluctuations of their condition. It is the state and right which the Amalgamated Society of Engineers contend for. . . . The whole of our system of political economy, and the vexed questions of free trade or protection are re-opened, and will have to be re-considered in consequence of the appearance of the operative interest, which the protectionist and the free trader appear to have overlooked in their speculations and policy. The questions which this third interest raises are too vast, important, and new, for the traveller to do more than point them out for the consideration of the political economist and philosopher."

The views glanced at in these observations were not quite new to Mr. Laing's mind in 1852, for in his work upon the Social and Political State of Europe, published in 1850, he observed:—" Before the political economist condemns *ore rotundo* the whole restrictive system of the continent, with all its guilds, incorporations, licenses, privileges, superintendence, and interference, he should consider that these social arrangements have existed on the continent of Europe from the decline of the Roman Empire until the present time, and have existed in all the castes and classifications of employments belonging to each caste in more ancient stages of civilizations than in Europe. They have survived all revolutions, invasions, conquests, and changes in governments and dynasties. This vitality of the principle in western Europe, its diffusion from time immemorial over India, its full vigour at the present day over the whole continent, although in different hands, the hands of government factors instead of local incorporations, show that the principle is deeply rooted in some generally felt necessity or expediency. What is this necessity or expediency, to which in all ages and countries civil liberty in the exercise of industry has been sacrificed? This question involves one which has become all important in the present social state of Europe. . . . Is labour property? Is labour itself a property, entitled to legal protection, as much as lands or any other kind of property which labour produces? The common accord of mankind must go far in settling this question."

Such is Mr. Laing's view of the objects and expediency of the restrictions upon the free exercise of industry enforced on the Continent by government interference, and aimed at in this country by some of the regulations of trades' unions and combinations, and I shall make very little comment upon it. I must remark, however, that Mr. Laing is wrong in assuming that the universal prevalence of a system proves even the universal consent of mankind to its existence, for the majority of mankind were at one time unwilling slaves; and the regulations of the mediæval guilds were not submitted to the approbation of the operatives belonging to them. The necessity or expediency which gave birth to those guilds and incor-

porations was not a recognition of the rights of labour, but simply the necessity or expediency which merchants or manufacturers in towns felt of combining to defend themselves against feudal oppression, and the violence of a semi-barbarous age. It was for protection against external aggression and internal disorder, not internal or external competition, that they organised their industrial associations.

These associations were at first only the united efforts of individuals to preserve security and order, at a time when peace and science had not yet revealed the natural principles of social organization; when industry was in a state of siege, and therefore necessarily subjected to some unwholesome restraints; when the choice lay between some restriction of individual liberty from within, and annihilation of it from without; and when the operative classes were too close to feudal servitude in the country, to be very sensitive to the milder pressure of apprenticeship in towns.

The artificial division of labour, effected by the observance of caste in employments, and by the mediæval incorporations and apprenticeships, was besides productive of economic advantages, which in backward and unsettled times might otherwise never have been attained. Hence the comparative excellence of Indian and Egyptian art in ancient times has been so far justly attributed to the observance of caste, that a division of labour and the maintenance of social order were effected by that observance.

But India and Egypt never rivalled Tyrian or Athenian art; and in the middle ages, when Milan was at the zenith of its opulence and commercial prosperity, its industrial code was a Magna Charta, permitting entire freedom in the choice of occupation to the inhabitants of whatever rank or sex; and it was on the introduction of the incorporation system that the manufactures and greatness of Milan declined.*

There is, however, one principle urged by Mr. Laing, to which I cordially assent as universally applicable to every age and country, and as being as valid in this age of rapid and peaceful industrial progress as in times when the developments of labour and invention were few and simple, and when right had constantly to defend itself against might. That principle is the right of property in labour, a right which Adam Smith has well defined in the following words:—
 “The property which every man has in his own labour, as it is the original foundation of all other property, so it is the most sacred and inviolable. The patrimony of a poor man lies in the strength and dexterity of his hands, and to hinder him from employing this strength and dexterity in what manner he thinks proper without injury to his neighbour, is a plain violation of this most sacred right. It is a manifest encroachment upon the just liberty both of the workman and of those who might be disposed to employ him. As it hin-

* Cours d'Economie Politique, par M. P. Rossi, Deuxieme Edition, vol. 1, page 384 and 399.

ders the one from working at what he thinks proper, so it hinders the others from employing whom they think proper.”*

My object being, however, rather to show the present character of combinations, than to discuss whether they are in any respects what they ought not to be, I shall not stop to apply the passage I have just quoted from Adam Smith. The application is, indeed, so self evident, that the passage is in itself a sufficient answer to any argument such as Mr. Lang’s, defending restrictions upon the exercise of industry on the plea of a right of property in labour.

I proceed, therefore, to state the results of my inquiry.

In 1838, a select committee of the House of Commons on combinations reported without comment a quantity of evidence, relating chiefly to the towns of Dublin, Belfast, and Glasgow.

In 1841, the commissioners appointed to inquire into the condition of the hand-loom weavers, after censuring the parliamentary committee of 1838, for neglecting to report the conclusions and recommendations suggested by the evidence taken before them, and stating their own belief that combination led to every sort of violence and outrage, and that it was the practice of the combined trades “to affix to the breach of their rules penalties rising through every gradation of suffering, from simple insult to mayhem and death, added the following startling observation:—“If we were compelled to point out the spot in the British islands in which combination is most absolute, it is Dublin. Yet Dublin possesses, and has long possessed, a large and well organized police.” Elsewhere the commissioners say:—“We are told that in Dublin no one who violates these rules (of trades unions) can consider his life safe for a single day.” Now the towns which I selected in order to ascertain the character and results of combination at the present day, and especially in Ireland, were Dublin, Limerick, Cork, Belfast, and Liverpool. It will be seen, from the general tenor of the evidence, whether the remarks of the commissioners would now be applicable to Dublin in particular, and whether combination is now generally a cause of violence and atrocious outrages.

I shall state the evidence I have received with respect to the five towns, in the order in which they have been already named,† the first being

DUBLIN.

1. My first witness with respect to this city is a very enterprising manufacturer of military and travelling furniture

In his opinion, tradesmen’s societies and clubs have no definite purpose in their proceedings against employers; for, according to his experience, it is when the members are flush of money that they give trouble to employers, not caring (as long as the money lasts)

* Wealth of Nations, Book 1, Chapter x.

† The evidence presented in this paper was collected by the writer, partly from communications with which he was favoured in answer to written questions, and partly from special conversations with some of the gentlemen referred to as witnesses.

whether they are thrown out of employment or not. He met with considerable opposition and difficulty in his own business about two years ago, from the cabinet makers whom he employed. They struck because he employed carpenters to make packing-cases, although they acknowledged they would rather not make them themselves; and he could not afford to pay cabinet-maker's wages for such simple work. They said they were sorry for it, but they could not help it, because the society would not let them work for him as long as he employed carpenters. He believes this was a retaliation upon the carpenters' society, some of whom had refused to work for another employer as long as he employed cabinet makers. My informant, however, continued his business, by employing "colts" or "nobs," that is non "society men." Guards were then stationed upon his shop, and various attempts were made to bribe or seduce his new men from him; but no violence was used. He had, however, occasion to take some proceedings in the police court, to put a stop to the annoyance he experienced. Since then he has never had any trouble from combination, although he does not employ society men; but had the cabinet-makers been successful in their first opposition, his business, which was entirely new in Dublin, would have been driven away like the trade of ship-building. He thinks the regulations and proceeding of traders' societies are now more injurious to themselves than to employers or other workmen; although, in his own case, he is obliged to keep a larger stock on hands and more labour constantly employed, than if he had a free choice among all the workmen in Dublin or elsewhere, just as he might require their assistance.

He believes it is a rule of the Dublin Carpenters' Society, that no workman in employment shall contract to take another job as long as any other member is out of work; and that it is also a rule that no workmen owing a certain amount to the club shall get any employment until his arrears are paid, although the only means of paying off the arrears would be the receipt of wages.

2. My next witness is connected with an engineering company.

He states that in some trades the workmen do by combination maintain a higher rate of wages than can be earned in other places where the trades are open. For instance, in Dublin the wages of moulders average above thirty shillings a week, while in Glasgow (where there is no combination in the trade) the average is twenty-four shillings. He accounts for the possibility of maintaining this higher rate, because Scotch or English workmen will not come over here unless for higher wages than they receive in their own locality, where they feel themselves at home and secure of constant employment;* and at the same time the cost of transport is such an

* It appears from the evidence given before the Parliamentary Committee, that, in 1838, all the elements of a workman's necessary expenditure, provisions, house-rent, coals and clothing, were dearer in Dublin than any other town in the kingdom except London; and to whatever extent this may still be true, it tends to account for a higher rate of wages in Dublin than elsewhere, independent of combination.

addition to the price of metal manufactures, that the Scotch or English manufacturers cannot undersell the Dublin employer in the market here, although the latter pays more for his labour. But he does not think the existence of a higher rate of wages resulting from combination a proof that the system is beneficial to the workman, because, in consequence of the limited amount of labour for which there is room in the trades, there is much difficulty in getting employment for his children, and consequently the total income of his family may be much smaller than if no artificial restrictions existed to limit the amount and accessibility of employment. Dublin capitalists are, by an excessive rate of wages, prevented from carrying on some kinds of work which Dublin workmen perform with a dexterity and facility not to be excelled anywhere in the United Kingdom. For example, the firm with which he is connected some time ago commenced building railway carriages, for which there was a great demand, and their men turned out work of the best description; but the enterprise was found unprofitable, in consequence of the rate of wages, and was abandoned. The rate fixed by the societies with which he is acquainted is a minimum rate, and their rules do not prevent a superior workman from earning more if he can, so that the mischievous results of a compulsory uniformity of wages do not follow; but at the same time the minimum is often above the value of the work of an inferior workman, and the superior workman may be therefore obliged to accept lower than the full value of his work, or less than he could otherwise earn; or the employer might be obliged to relinquish his business. The good workman in such a case pays for the bad.

The Dublin societies object to task work, or working by the piece, and until the habits of the working classes are improved, he does not regard this as injurious to them; because, although without injury to health the workman might earn more in a day by piece work than he does by a weekly or daily rate of wages, yet after earning anything unusual an interval of dissipation generally follows, and therefore he conceives it to be more beneficial to a man and his family that he should regularly earn fifteen shillings a week than thirty shillings by fits and starts. Combinations in Dublin do not now lead to acts of violence, and he is confident that much might be done by employers to gain the good will of the working classes, and show them that they have a common interest, and that it would be profitable to capitalists to pay a higher rate of wages if their men could be induced to work heartily, and save the constant losses arising to employers from carelessness and waste on the part of their workmen. It is frequently said, this gentleman adds, that strikes and similar results of combination are always occasioned by the secretary of the society, or one or two other "ring leaders;" but he believes this charge to be without foundation so far as interested or malicious motives are concerned, and it is made simply because, in the discharge of their duties to the "body," these men are brought into more immediate contact and opposition with the

employers when a difference arises, from the position in which they are placed by their fellow workmen, who choose them for their intelligence and resolution, and the confidence they repose in their integrity, about which qualities they are very quick-sighted.

3. My next Dublin witness is engaged in the ship-building trade, which, according to the evidence given before the Parliamentary Committee of 1838, was "completely annihilated" in Dublin by combinations of the most violent and sanguinary character, to the ruin not only of the ship-carpenters' trade, but of that of blacksmiths, rope-makers, sail-makers, and others. On the other hand, my informant writes, "Among the shipwrights belonging to this port, there has not been anything worthy of being called combination for many years; although, no doubt, there have been occasional disputes between masters and men, but none affecting either life or property. The men engaged in this trade are not very numerous as compared with other ports, and are generally pretty fully employed at high wages, varying from four shillings to four shillings and sixpence a-day. There are very excellent workmen among them, and if the spirit of enterprize among our merchants were equal to the capabilities of our port, we should have no difficulty in turning out ships of all classes, equal in every respect to those of any port in the kingdom."

4. The evidence of my fourth informant, who is an eminent manufacturer, is to the following effect: "I believe there are few trades, if any, in Dublin in which combinations does not exist to a limited extent. The general effect and object of combination, as it now exists, is to preserve a uniformity of wages among the workmen in each respective trade. Combination, as generally understood, (*i.e.* aggressive) is on the decline, which may be attributed partly to the smallness of the members engaged in trade in the city, and partly to the stringency of the police regulations, which almost effectually prevent combinations from hindering men from working as they please; but I believe unions among tradesmen to maintain their prices quietly are not on the decline, but are as strong as ever."

5. Another experienced gentleman writes, chiefly in reference to the trades connected with house-building:—"Combination exists among masons, bricklayers, and sawyers, but latterly in so small a degree as not materially to affect employers. It exists also among carpenters, slaters, painters, and stone-cutters. The effects produced by the combinations among these trades have been decidedly injurious to the employment of capital and labour. The present organization among the carpenters of this city is preventing the employment of many carpenters from the country towns, who cannot be put to work for longer than a day, unless by paying £7, (no doubt for drinking) no matter how skilled the hands may be, or what the want may be on either side.

The men who give their time much to the society business, (with few exceptions) become addicted to drink, and consequently depraved, as well as less industrious. The uniform rate of wages en-

forced is a direct bar to the development of mechanical skill; graduated wages would improve both the heads and hands of the tradesman. The system of combination is, however, much on the decline, which may partly be attributed to the efficiency of the police establishment. The carpenters' body is the only one which gives us much trouble. But the effects produced by combination upon the trade of Dublin have been decidedly depressing. The fact of not being able to employ hands enough to "get ahead," (although there are hands enough to be had) when trade is brisk, is quite a sufficient proof of it. Combination it was which drove the nailing trade to England, where it is done by machinery."

In connection with the statements of this gentleman, it may be remarked that the Parliamentary Committee were informed by several witnesses, that outrages were most frequently committed by the trades connected with building, especially by carpenters and sawyers. While, on the other hand, Mr. Dargan, on the day of the opening of the Great Dublin Exhibition, publicly made use of the following words:—"The work has received from the operatives their best assistance. All of them have made the greatest exertions, displayed the greatest activity, and shown the most generous feeling for the success of the Exhibition, such as I have never seen exhibited in my life. Workmen are shrewd enough to know their power, and there was not one who did not know that if they chose to embarrass by irregularities and combinations, they could prevent us from opening on the 12th. With this knowledge, and during all this time, they never did a single act to embarrass us in any part of the design. I believe I may say here, in the presence of many from other quarters, at least I believe myself, that such an occurrence could scarcely happen in any other country."

6. Since these words were spoken, I had the advantage of a conversation with a gentleman of much experience with respect to the employment and management of workmen, and officially acquainted with all the circumstances of the building of the Exhibition Palace.

This gentleman informed me that the notion very generally entertained, that there had been a serious strike at the commencement of the building, was quite a mistake; the only difference which had occurred having been of a very trifling nature. The Dublin carpenters afterwards worked along with the workmen from the country in perfect harmony. It was his conviction that the great secret of many combinations against employers is irregularity in the payment of wages; and that workmen regularly and fairly paid, and treated with temper and kindness as well as firmness, are very easily managed. The true policy of an employer, and it was the policy pursued by Mr. Dargan, was to look ahead and watch whether there are circumstances in operation which are calculated to raise the value of labour, such as emigration, or to increase the labourer's necessary expenditure, such as a rise in the price of provisions, and to take the initiative by allowing a fair addition to wages before the workmen demand it. He believes that an em-

ployer who acts on this principle, and who treats his men with the consideration they are entitled to, at the same time that he is resolute in dealing with the few ill-disposed or turbulent characters who are to be met with among all large bodies of men, will seldom find combination interfere with his arrangements, and will find his advantage both in that, and the efficiency and heartiness of his workmen's exertions. In like manner, he considers that all circumstances which tend to ameliorate the condition of the labouring classes tend to preserve harmony between them and their employers; and the prosperity of trade which has followed recent legislation, and the outlets afforded by emigration, have both had this beneficial effect.

Such is the general character of the evidence I have collected relative to combinations in Dublin, which for various reasons I have stated at greater length than it will be necessary to go to with regard to the other towns; the next being

LIMERICK.

1. A gentleman who has had much experience in building, writes from that city to the following effect:—

"The avowed objects of Trade Unions at their formation were social advantages, and assistance to unemployed workmen and to sick and helpless members and their families; but the real object has always been to secure high wages. At one time, about the year 1820, nearly all the trades of Limerick were united in one body, called The Union. At present few trades have a body, the decline of the system having arisen from the resistance of employers, and the protection of the police. Those which have bodies still are the masons, painters, carpenters, slaters, sawyers, and shipwrights. The unions of these trades endeavour to exclude all workmen from employment without payment of a large sum to the society; the mason's admission fee being £9; and they enforce a uniform rate of wages to bad and good workmen, the result of which is a very low ignorant class of men for the most part, especially the masons, who are by far the most daring. The principal employers do not employ body-men, except masons, who succeed best in excluding other workmen; but a spirit of revival of combinations seems prevalent at present, and at this very time some bricklayers who were engaged by an eminent manufacturer here to set his boilers (which is a business not understood here) are not permitted to work, and are threatened with violence if they do not return to Belfast. I conceive the chief cause of the maintenance of combinations in Limerick to be the example of Dublin and other towns, and the general feeling in favour of the system. Emigration has had a very serious effect in removing the best workmen, also the leaders of combination. The meetings of the unions are generally held in public houses." I may observe, with reference to the fact stated by this gentleman, that the masons are most successful in enforcing their regulations; that the cause of this is probably the circumstance that the mason's union is a national one, while the unions of most

other trades are merely local, as is the case with the unions of carpenters, of which there are two in Dublin, with some difference in their regulations.

2. In answer to a series of questions which were submitted to another gentleman in Limerick, he writes thus :

“Combination has had the most injurious effects here in the trades in which it exists, which were those connected with building. The good workmen are not allowed to earn more than the bad, and consequently the good workmen are those removed by emigration. Employers here are afraid of speculating in building, for fear of interruptions arising from combination. The unions generally meet in public-houses, which is a cause of intemperance.

The next town is

CORK.

Having been informed by a gentleman belonging to the county of Cork, that this city was the metropolis of combination of every sort, and that its natural advantages for trade were counteracted by that cause, I applied for specific information to a gentleman long resident in it, and possessed of much experience relative to the habits and condition of the working classes. From a very interesting communication in reply, I extract the following passages :—

“Cork is not now ‘the very metropolis of combinations.’ Trades’ unions linger out a feeble existence, and this effort to secure an unnecessary monopoly is kept up in public-houses. The secretary is generally some half-drunken, specious, insolent fellow, who is clever enough to idle at other men’s expense, and to foment mischief by his attractive ‘pluckyness;’ and if there be anything in the chest which the publican host has not melted, the said actuary and secretary going now and then make a neat balance of the residue. Still the men do not learn to avoid such fellows. I have tried to get these trades’ societies to meet out of public-houses, and some of them have for a time done so, but they soon relapse. The good fire, kept for them without management or trouble on their part; the newspapers, and, above all, the porter and punch, are irresistible attractions, and they will go to their low club-house, as another class to cigar shops and midnight taverns.

“I am not an advocate for these associations. We are now in a free trading country, in so many things, that combinations even without force seem quite superfluous; but if they will assemble in a ‘house of call,’ a place where tradesmen may be found, when required, in shelter and warmth, and with a newspaper to read, I would have it done where men would not be induced to buy the means of becoming temporary idiots or madmen. Proper hiring halls need not be places of combination. Tradesmen have their prides, their jealousies, and their aristocraticalities like other classes; so they must, in a hiring hall, be supplied with separate rooms, for they will not in any numbers commingle as traders.

That is not *esprit du corps*. Artificial remedies are, however, useless against any combination and monopoly; to promote by natural means every facility for the full and free distribution of skilled and unskilled labour, is all we ought to do. It will, if we let it alone, and remove all artificial obstructions, regulate itself like corn, and emigration is now an element in this work. A man will not attack an employer, to beat him into half-a-crown a week of additional wages, if he can without a dangerous struggle go to America and triple the payment he seeks. The *ascripta gleba* system was for slaves and serfs. Railroads and cheap passages are so many barriers broken down in favour of the industrious and well-disposed. Free trade in men, women, and children has upset monopoly in the labour-market."

BELFAST.

The following is from an eminent linen manufacturer residing near that town:—

"I cannot give you, from practical observation, any information respecting trades' unions, as we have not any such societies in the linen trade; but I am aware that in Belfast almost all classes of mechanics have their unions, and the effects of those combinations are very injurious to the working classes. My belief is, that generally these societies are formed for a good object, such as relieving a sick or poor brother; but after a time an idle fellow or two gets fond of speaking, and going about raising discord between masters and employed. We have to thank 'turn-outs' for the vast strides machinery has taken during the last twenty or thirty years, as the masters have been obliged to look to inventions to operate against this disposition on the part of their workmen, and so the greatest improvements have appeared after such outbreaks."

With respect to

LIVERPOOL,

1. I am informed by an eminent merchant, that "Combinations exist among shipwrights, blacksmiths, ropemakers, and most other trades. The shipwrights will not permit any workman to be employed who has not served as an apprentice in Liverpool, and only one apprentice is allowed to every three of themselves; and again, if a workman takes offence at a ship-owner and leaves off work, notice is given to the club, and no workman, I understand, can be got instead. Very bad results have arisen from the system. It is most injurious to this port, as the rate of wages is enormously high, higher than in any other in the kingdom. Many vessels are in consequence sent to other places to be repaired, and brought back to load; but although their daily wages are excessively high, they are very irregular at work, being pretty generally demoralized characters, the consequence of belonging to these clubs. . . . At the same time, there are cases in which it is necessary for workmen

to combine for their own protection against unfairness and selfishness on the part of employers."

2. Another gentleman, an experienced shipowner, replies to my questions:—"Combinations exist in all trades in Liverpool with scarcely any exception; most prejudicially in those connected with ship-building. They enforce their regulations by strikes (always when trade is brisk) and by intimidation of other workmen; but cases of actual violence are on the decline. Many concerns have been totally ruined by strikes, frequently on the most frivolous and unjust pretences, which applies to every firm in the town engaged in the shipping trade; and in consequence of the greatly increased cost of production, some vessels have left the port, returning for cargo. It does not follow that wages would fall if these clubs were suppressed, since the demand for labour regulates in a great degree its value. Employment in Liverpool, and generally elsewhere, is not constant, as in the case of house servants, but depends upon the state of trade; and although excessive wages do not generally stop employment, as time is of more consequence than extra cost to shippers, yet in most trades the ultimate result is injurious to the workman, because the increased cost of an article causes purchasers to hold off, or look out for a cheaper market. I do not consider that clubs lead to drinking much more than would be the case under any circumstances, but they undoubtedly do to insubordination, insolence, and discontent among workmen, and, as a consequence, to constant enmity and disputes between master and man." I have only to add, with regard to Liverpool, that the newspapers have lately contained accounts of meetings of the operatives of various trades, for the purpose of organizing means of obtaining higher wages, both on the ground of the advanced prices of provision, and the improved demand for labour in consequence of emigration.

Having already trespassed upon your time, I do not propose now to review the general results of the evidence contained in this paper. It shows that combination, although declining, is still one of the social arrangements of the working classes of this country; but that it exists in somewhat different forms and with somewhat different effects in different localities and trades; and (as was to be expected) there is some variety of opinion as to its causes, and the means of preventing its injurious consequences. One thing is plain, that it does not now produce the crimes and outrages upon which the Handloom Weavers' Commissioners commented in such strong terms.

The conduct of the Amalgamated Engineers last year was a striking instance of the pacific character of modern combinations, and of the disposition of the employed classes at the present day to rely upon appeals to public opinion rather than open force.

The debates in the House of Commons, on the 4th of this month, on the *Payment of Wages Bill*, and the *Combination of Workmen Bill*, bore silent but unmistakable testimony to the same fact.

The object of the proposers of the former bill (which was opposed by the Government and lost upon the second reading) was to relieve the distress of the stocking weavers of Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire, by prohibiting deductions from their wages in the shape of rent from their knitting-frames. In the debate no allusion whatever was made to any act of violence on the part of the weavers, although they attribute their sufferings to unjust exactions on the part of their immediate employers, and the use of improved machinery by the principal manufacturers.

And although the Combinations of Workmen Bill (which proposed to allow workmen to combine to "peaceably persuade or induce others to abstain from work," in order to obtain higher wages or shorter hours of work) was deemed inexpedient and opposed by the Government, there was not any reference to the existence of a disposition on the part of workmen to act otherwise than "peaceably" in any such combination.

Another conclusion forcibly suggested by the evidence I have read, is that employers have in general a great deal in their own power with regard to combinations. Capital, like landed property, has its duties as well as its rights, which it is the true interest of the owners to observe. What the duties are which capitalists owe to the employed classes? what are the duties of Government to those classes? what their duties to each other?—these are questions into which I may have other opportunities of entering.