

THE LABOR QUESTION IN ILLINOIS.

From Our Own Correspondent.

CHICAGO, Thursday, May 2, 1867.

Our streets are full of jaded, despondent looking men to-day, who but yesterday were full of excitement and enthusiasm. With families to support, and without accumulated means, they do not appear to enjoy the new situation as much in reality as they did in prospect. The class of workmen who are most clamorous for eight hours are not, as a general thing, the most intellectually disposed of our mechanics and workmen. On the contrary, a large proportion of them belong to that branch which seek their intellectual improvement in whisky and lager-beer saloons. There are also two other classes—those who are honest and earnest in their purposes of improvement, and who will well and profitably employ the additional time gained under the new order of things, and the small demagogues who seek through this agitation to gain some little notoriety, and hope to be wafted into official position upon the wave of enthusiasm which they seek to create.

The telegraph has given you an outline of the "great demonstration" yesterday. The turn out was a respectable one, though far from being what was anticipated. There were probably five or six thousand men in the procession, many of whom, however, came from abroad, from even out of the State, as it had been determined to make Chicago a "test question" in this business. Some whole trades and unions declined, officially, to participate in the movement. Such was the case with the Typographical Union and some others.

The banners and other representations were characteristic of such occasions, and so were the speeches. Mayor RICE, who presided, sat gracefully astride of the fence, and did not, in what he said, seriously commit himself to anything or any body. He was glad to please the workingmen, and—get their votes. At the same time he hesitated about displeasing another portion of our citizens. Hon. A. J. KUYKENDALL, of Egypt, made a very good speech, and was followed by Mr. RICHARD TREVELICK, who makes it a business, and quite a profitable one, too, to get up reforms. Some lesser lights, also, illuminated the occasion. Letters were read from several "distinguished gentlemen," a "gushing" letter from Gov. FLETCHER, of Missouri; a guarded letter from Gov. OGLESBY, of this State; an approving letter from Hon. B. C. COOK; a brief dispatch from Gov. O. P. MORTON, of Indiana, and a diplomatic letter from President JOHNSON. The whole affair passed off quite creditably, only there was more drunkenness than was necessary, and yet this was confined to comparatively a few.

The triumph of the eight-hour movement, so far as being legalized is concerned, has been speedy and prompt in Illinois. It was brought about by the mutual fears of our political parties. Those in favor of it showed a determination to make it the issue at the polls—to sacrifice all partisan considerations to its success. The number of workingmen in the State is so large that they hold the balance of power; therefore, neither party dared oppose the measure, but each was anxious to be ahead of the other in its support. So, under these propitious circumstances the bill passed through the Legislature, without much consideration, and with but a slight show of opposition.

The effect of the new movement upon the manufacturing interests of Chicago will be—I will not say disastrous—but highly prejudicial. Our manufacturers have hitherto labored under the disadvantages of high rents, high taxes, high prices of material and labor, and have been able to prosper only from the large amount of business which concentrates at this point. Had the strike for the new time under the old wages been general the effect would have been disastrous. As it is, work is stopped on half finished buildings—railroad and machine-shops are closed—other kinds of business is suspended, and thousands who were last week earning and receiving \$3 and \$4 per day, are idle and drawing upon their scanty savings. Business is comparatively dull before; but if this state of things continues Chicago will suffer immensely, and the "benevolent" will be called upon to double their charities next Winter to make up for the idleness of the present. In many cases compromises have already been made—such as each party losing an hour—nine hours old pay for eight hours work. In other instances the employers have conceded all, and still others, the employed have acquiesced in a reduction of wages in proportion to the reduction of time.

As a measure of political economy, that great tester of men and things, time alone can solve the problem whether it will be beneficial or otherwise. Opinions are now governed pretty much by interest; but the operation of the system will develop its merits and its faults.

CHICAGO, Friday, May 3, 1867.

When I wrote you yesterday the city was quiet, but before noon it became evident that the riot element had been aroused, and men, not content with the privilege of working eight hours themselves, were determined to compel all others into the same line of conduct. And so organized gangs prowled around the city, driving men from their work and forcibly taking possession of manufacturing establishments and stopping the machinery. There were several serious affrays and some bodily injury suffered; but nothing fatal occurred—no lives were lost. In some cases establishments were forcibly closed. The railroad shops and freight houses were visited and the men driven from their work, there laying an

embargo upon trade in that direction for the day at least.

The mob came principally from the classic ground of Bridgeport, and was composed almost entirely of foreigners—Irish chiefly. There was also a large number of boys in the ranks. The saloons were largely patronized, and the spirit of violence and riot freely imbibed.

To-day the scenes of disorder were renewed at an early hour, and by the same class of people. The Mayor issued a proclamation citing a very stringent law which was passed two years ago to prevent men on a strike from interfering with or attempting to intimidate those who continued to work. Special policemen were sworn in, special revolvers were provided by those who expected their establishments would be assailed. The rioters attempted to repeat the operations of yesterday, but in most instances found the preparations made to receive them too strong. They closed several establishments where machinery was run during the forepart of the day, but after the police began to make arrests they fought shy. A large number of the most turbulent were arrested during the day and lodged in the jail. This proceeding rather dampened the ardor of the disturbers of the public peace, but all day long squads of idlers and evil-disposed persons thronged the streets in the neighborhood of the railroad shops, machine shops and planing mills.

These outbreaks, of course, do not receive the countenance of the better portion of mechanics and laboring men. But the small demagogues have raised up a mob spirit they cannot control; and men will suffer for going a little further than they have been led.

There is great derangement in business; but the last two days has laid out the eight-hour system cold, or I am no prophet. The rioters have produced a reaction of public sentiment, and done more to prevent the smooth working of the system than all its opponents would have been able to accomplish.

In other parts of the State but little attention was paid to the "new era." It was generally quietly ignored. In Aurora, Amboy, and a few towns where railroad shops have called together a large number of men, feeble strikes were essayed. But they did not amount to anything serious. And the law does not apply at all to agricultural laborers; so that we shall hear within a week or two about all that will ever be heard of an eight-hour law as a practical measure.

To add to the excitement to-day, we have had an extensive conflagration. One of the largest hotels in the city was destroyed, and the fire was so obstinate that it kept the Department on the alert a good part of the day. And then the suddenness of the fire—the escape of men and women from the third, fourth and fifth stories by means of ropes—the great danger of the destruction of Crosby's Opera House, added to the interest and excitement of the scene. Chicago has been decidedly nervous to-day.

THE INCOME LIST.

The papers this morning published the list of taxable incomes for this district. Chicago shows a fearful falling off, as compared with the last two years. We have only two incomes over \$100,000: C. H. MCCORMICK, the "reaper man," \$169,760, and PETER SHUTTLE, wagon-maker, \$111,625. There are only ten others whose incomes exceed \$50,000. One dry-goods man has gone down from \$107,000 to \$31,000. ALFRED COWLES, of the Tribune, leads the publishers' list with \$31,450, followed by J. MEDILL, of the same concern, with \$23,500, while the proprietors of the Journal and the Times are not in the list.

MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS.

The weather is still cold and backward. Fires and overcoats have been a necessity to-day. Vegetation is backward, and everything wears an unseasonable aspect.

Business is in a feverish state, owing to various causes. To many there is a dark look ahead. Money is moderately tight, but people are holding on to see what will "turn up" before embarking largely. Best brands flour are up to \$20 at retail—not a very favorable figure for "strikes."