

power of the world ;—while the laborers,—the active partners in the whole concern,—do not share in these advantages in a corresponding degree. These are strong points, and, in the main, they are true. And labor has an unquestioned right to change the terms of the partnership *if it can*, and to exact for itself a larger, while it imposes on capital a smaller, share of the advantages of their joint exertions.

But we doubt the possibility of making any very great changes in the relations between the two. Those relations are fixed and maintained by laws more potent than the enactments of any Legislature. They do not depend on votes, and are not in the least affected by universal suffrage, nor disturbed or checked in their operation by eloquent stump speeches or able editorials. A fundamental condition of free society is that all its elements, and all the forces that give it power, shall be free in their development :—and any action of the Government that interferes with this, retards the growth and injures the prosperity of the society itself.

If labor cripples capital, it will drive it away, and so deprive itself of the only means whereby it lives. If capital oppresses labor, it degrades society and saps the foundations of its strength. And if Government interferes with either, or attempts to regulate and control their mutual relations, it takes from both that freedom of action, under natural and indefeasible laws, which is their only guarantee of growth and prosperity. Any law which deprives a laboring man of the right to get the most he can for his work, or of the right to work as much as he finds to his advantage,—or which compels an employer to pay as much for little work as for much, or for poor work as for good, inflicts a gross injustice on the parties concerned, and cannot possibly promote the general good.

Capital and Labor—The Eight-Hour Law.

The Eight-hour law proves to be a failure, and its enactment is widely regarded as a farce. It was intended by those who asked for it, to give ten hours' pay for eight hours' work ; but is framed so as not to do anything of the sort. It simply declared that a day should mean eight hours, in estimating the duration of labor :—but at what rate it should be paid for, was left an open question.

The bill was passed on the eve of an election ; and, like all bills passed under such circumstances, the men who passed it were anxious, not so much to make it of practical advantage to workingmen, as to secure their votes by making them believe that it was so intended. Its enactment was a political trick,—not prompted by a sincere regard for the working classes, nor framed with the primary motive of promoting their interests. It ought either to be repealed or revised. It should either say what it means, or it should say nothing at all. As it stands, it simply misleads both parties,—employers and employed,—and benefits neither. And in its application to persons employed by the Government, it has led to controversy, different action on the part of different departments, and general confusion and discontent.

It has generally been deemed, and has always been found, a perilous undertaking for Government to fix the prices or control the sale of food, clothing, labor, or any of the other necessaries of life. The general principle that all these things will be best regulated when they are left to be *freely* regulated by the parties concerned, has been conceded by nearly all who believe in freedom at all. The attempt of Governments to control these things has always failed ; and we see no reason to believe that it will not always fail hereafter.

Capital has advantages over labor, which labor will always deem unfair and unjust. It is much more manageable ; its holders can much more easily combine ; its power to hold out in a contest between the two is much greater ; and, as a necessary result, its chances of success are the best. It is quite as necessary, too, to the prosperity of a community as labor is. The South to-day has plenty of labor,—but its lack of capital renders its labor useless. As a general rule, capital can always command labor, while it is but rarely and under very exceptional circumstances, that labor can impose its own laws upon capital.

Capital, moreover, has this great advantage that, if treated unjustly in any country, it can go elsewhere. The small returns capital can command in England sends millions of English capital to this country every year ; and an effective eight-hour law in England would send the great bulk of the free capital of the Kingdom elsewhere. An effective eight-hour law here would have a similar effect. The large capitalists who invest their incomes in erecting dwellings, for example, will look to other quarters when building becomes so expensive as to be without profit. And then workmen who live by building, as well as all who hire dwellings to live in, must suffer by the change.

Capital and labor are dependent upon each other, and each profits and prospers only in connection with the other. But there is very clearly a general feeling on the part of the laboring classes throughout the world, that *labor should have a larger share of the profits of the joint operation than it gets at present*. Capital certainly gets the most. The capitalists of the world get richer ;—they live more sumptuously ;—they absorb, more and more, the culture, the grandeur, the enjoyments and the