

common peasant man and the labourer in the towns or in the fields 'shall neither make nor wear cloth that costs more than half a gulden the ell, neither shall they wear gold, pearls, velvet, silk, nor embroidered clothes, nor shall they permit their wives or children to wear such.' In England as in Germany the middle age had its drawbacks, its big and little tyrannies, its manifold discontents and hardships. 'But, on the whole,' says Professor ROGERS, 'there were none of those extremes of poverty and wealth which have excited the astonishment of philanthropists, and are now exciting the indignation of workmen. The age, it is true, had its discontents, and these discontents were expressed forcibly and in a startling manner. But of poverty which perishes unheeded, of a willingness to do honest work and a lack of opportunity, there was little or none.'

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The Reformation in Germany and in England witnessed the fall and degradation of the working man. In the lecture quoted above, the distinguished economist, Professor THOROLD ROGERS, shows how the beggary and ruin of the working classes were brought about by the extravagance of HENRY VIII., the dissolution of the monasteries, the confiscation of the guild lands by Protector SOMERSET and the other unprincipled guardians of EDWARD VI., and by the usage of a debased coinage through which England, once the most powerful of western states, became 'of little more account in the policy of Europe than a petty German principedom was.' The Catholic Church had wiped out slavery in Great Britain. It was reintroduced and legalised in the days of EDWARD VI. It was still in full and grinding operation—for adult miners and salters and their children—until 1799, when it was suppressed by the Statute of 39 GEORGE III., cap. 56. England was made the hell of the working man from the reign of ELIZABETH till the present century was far advanced. By what THOROLD ROGERS terms the 'infamous' Statute of Laborers of the fifth year of Queen ELIZABETH, the British worker 'was handed over to the mercy of his employer at a time when he was utterly incapable of resisting the grossest tyranny.' He was placed in the hands of the justices in quarter sessions. They were able to 'check any discontent, even the discontent of despair, and might be trusted, if necessary, to starve the people into submission.' Their success was absolute and complete. They—in every instance employers of labor—fixed wages at starvation rates. From their decision there was no appeal. Under the Elizabethan Act it took the English Protestant artisan a whole year's labor or more to procure necessaries which the Catholic artisan could have secured in two weeks' work under the Statute of 1495. The condition of the agricultural laborer was even vastly worse than this under the shadow of the enactment of 'good Queen Bess.' He was gradually deprived of his rent-free house, of his rights of commonage, of wood, and of herbage for his cow and of a run for his poultry. 'The justices,' says THOROLD ROGERS, 'had done their work. They had made low wages—famine wages—traditional, and these wages, insufficient by themselves, were supplemented from the poor-rate.' This condition of things endured till the beginning of the eighteenth century. The Reformation was, in brief, the worst calamity that ever befell the working classes in Christian lands.

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The industrial revolution wrought by the introduction of machinery brought no surcease of his many sorrows to the British working man. Hard economists preached the heartless doctrine that all industrial relations—including the employment of labor—are of the nature of buying and selling in open market. The story of its application to industrial life forms one of the darkest pages in the history of the British working classes. During the reigns of GEORGE III., GEORGE IV., WILLIAM IV., and the early years of Queen VICTORIA, the working people employed in the coal mines, woollen, cotton, and other factories in England felt the bitter brunt of the following chief evils:—

(1) Insufficient wages; (2) over-work—the hours of labor being lengthened out to over twelve a day, sometimes to sixteen or more; (3) frauds and extortions in the shape of fines, confiscation of wages, and the iniquities of the truck system; (4) utter insecurity for the future; (5) cruelty to children, of which DEVAS says that it was 'hor-

rible incredible, unparalleled even in the history of pagan slavery': the details are too sickening even to refer to here; (6) immorality: the mines and factories became, says the same author, 'dens of iniquity' in which abominations were practised on a vast scale and of such a nature that the Royal Commissioners rightly refrained from referring to them in their report.

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The condition of the British workers was aggravated by Combination Laws, which prevented them from meeting together to deliberate over their industrial interests, or to gain an increase in wages, or to seek any measure of redress for their many wrongs. ADAM SMITH said of his time: 'We have no Acts of Parliament against combining to lower the price of work, but many against combining to raise it.' The Combination Laws were repealed in 1824. But the following year the employers of labor succeeded in having an Act passed which rendered illegal any action that (says GIBBONS) 'might result from those deliberations of workmen which a twelvemonth before had been legalised!' Till they succeeded in making their voices heard in the field of politics but little attention was paid in Parliament either to the rights or the wrongs of the workers. The paltry Factory Acts of 1802 to 1832 served only to tantalise. The real struggle for the right to live humanly was from 1833 to 1850. The Reform Bill, the growth of trades unions, the Chartist movement, all contributed to extend their influence. The 'orthodox' economists—who regarded the worker as they did a horse or a steer or a machine: a mere chattel, in fact—furiously opposed remedial legislation. Conspicuous among them were Sir ROBERT PEEL, Lord BROUGHAM, and 'the tribune of the people,' JOHN BRIGHT. Lord SHAFTESBURY became the champion of the working people. After a long struggle and many evasions and delays effective Workshop and Factory Acts were passed. They (1) regulated the sanitary and safety regulations affecting all classes of workers; (2) prohibited certain classes of work—on moral and sanitary grounds—to women and children; and (3) regulated the hours of wages for some or all of the six categories of working people. Much has been done. But much still remains to be effected. English miners and factory operatives are yet far off from the eight hours' day of their Catholic forefathers of four hundred years ago. New Zealand, the Australian colonies, Switzerland, and Germany stand in the van of enlightened and progressive factory legislation. The character of all such legislation is, however, necessarily limited, negative, and protective in its nature. It does not solve the social question, nor secure constant employment, nor the certainty of a reasonable wage. Much less can it restore the old familiar and friendly relations between master and man that prevailed during the Catholic days of the middle age. Employer and employé have drifted apart into two distinct classes. And that drift has caused the conflict which has inflicted untold misery upon the working man and created that hostility between capital and labor which has time and again threatened the fabric of our civilisation and social system with disruption.

St. Patrick's College.

A NOTICE of considerable interest to parents and guardians, with regard to scholarships at St. Patrick's College, Wellington, appears in this issue. These scholarships, which are open to all Catholic boys attending the parochial schools of the Colony, will be offered for competition in December, and consist of two of the yearly value of £25 each, tenable for four years, and two of the same yearly value each tenable for two years. Candidates for the former must be under 14 on the first of January next, and for the latter under 16 on the same date. Candidates must forward their applications to the Rector before November 1, and the examinations will be held at centres to suit the general convenience of those presenting themselves.

WE have to thank the Registrar-General, Mr E. J. von Dadelsen, for a copy of *The New Zealand Year Book* for the current year. The publication not only maintains the high standard for which past issues have been noted, but it has been enlarged, and a large amount of information taken from the last census returns has been introduced.

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