The political importance of the work of negro education, during the next few years, becomes immense, greater far than could be ever claimed before for any similar undertaking.

THE EIGHT-HOUR MOVEMENT.

Wants are the result of the combined operation of labor and capital. Two consequences would seem to follow from this truth. One is, that their combined action, to produce the best effects, must be harmonious; and the other is, that the product of their joint action must be divided between them according to the natural laws by which each is respectively governed. These laws cannot be resisted without punishment. Only by obeying them is success possible. Success means the largest attainable production of wealth and its just distribution between capital and labor. If this be so, then "the eight-hour labor movement," as it is called, which is now causing some excitement and alarm in the public mind, is wise and injurious; for its effect, if successful, would be to diminish production and give to labor a part or the whole of the profits which, by natural law, would belong to capital, which, therefore, ought to belong to it, and cannot be refused without ill consequences to both labor and capital.

To prove this, it is only necessary to state one or two plain and simple principles that relate to wages and profits and their relations to each other. These principles show that the interests of labor and capital are not opposed but identical, that they are promoted by harmonious action and injured by discord, and that the share of each in the gains of both is allotted by natural and necessary laws which cannot be resisted by any human contrivance.

The rate of wages is determined by competition among capitalists to obtain labor, and among laborers to obtain employment. Labor may be regarded as a commodity which one class has to sell and the other wishes to buy. Like all other commodities, it is governed by the natural law of supply and demand. When laborers are numerous in proportion to the demand for them, wages are low; that is to say, when labor is plenty it is cheap, just as wheat is cheap when it is plentiful. When laborers are few and the demand great, wages are high, just as a failure of the wheat crop increases its price. The capitalist who buys labor tries, like all buyers, to get it as cheap as he can. The working man who sells labor tries, like all sellers, to get as much for it as he can. The bargaining between the two is the process by which the rate of wages is ascertained, just as the market price of everything else is ascertained. It can be fixed by no other means, for there is no tribunal possible with power to determine it from day to day, or with knowledge equal to that of the parties. Evidently one of the parties is not such a tribunal. The market price, then, thus established by free bargaining, is the necessary price. That it is the just one, also, is to be inferred from another principle.

The market price, which is finally settled by competition or by the natural operation of the law of supply and demand, is that at which the whole of the commodity offered for sale will absorb the whole of the fund applicable to its purchase. Increase the commodity, the fund remaining the same, the price will fall. Increase the fund, the commodity remaining the same, the price will rise. This is a universal law, and rules alike the market for labor and for coal, or corn, or gold. The rate of wages will be that at which the whole of the funds applicable to the purpose will be absorbed in paying for the whole of the labor. If by low wages a part only of this fund be used, the remainder seeking similar employment will cause competition among capitalists and raise the rate. If wages are too high, the fund would be exhausted before the amount of labor is, and some of the laborers would either remain unemployed or soon reduce the rate by competition among themselves.

The proportion, therefore, between the number of laborers and the fund for their employment determines the rate of wages. This fund is the active capital of the country not required for other means of production, as, for example, machinery. Therefore the rate of wages can be raised in two ways only: by the increase of this fund or by the decrease of the number of laborers. It thus appears that by the normal, unfettered action of the natural laws of industry, the capitalist and the laborer are alike benefited. Should the capitalist be able to reduce wages below the natural standard, a portion of his capital would remain unemployed to his loss. Should the laborer succeed in raising wages above the rate at which the law of supply and demand propels him, he would encroach upon funds appropriated to means of production other than labor, to the loss of the capitalist, indeed, but to his own ultimate injury also. When capital ceases to be profitable in one branch of business it seeks another, and, if there be no other at home, it goes elsewhere. If threatened with unjust legal coercion or popular violence, and both these are implied or expressed in this eight-hour labor movement, it disappears. It is very timid and far-sighted, and runs away or hides itself at the approach of danger. Its withdrawal is proof that the body politic is sick, for it is the life-blood of business, and when it goes, enterprise languishes; trade becomes inactive; production is diminished, wealth ceases to accumulate; poverty overthrows all classes; wages fall, labor becomes degraded and squalid, and civilization decays. These, as many examples in history prove, are the fatal effects of mischievous and oppressive laws on the part of government, or of unjust attempts on the part of individuals to violate the security of property and the freedom of industry.

Such is the character of the eight-hour labor movement. It is a gigantic strike, the object of which is to force capitalists to pay a rate of wages to be fixed, not by contract between the parties, but by the laborers only. Eight hours is to be henceforth a legal day's work, instead of ten hours, as at present, and the capitalist is to pay for eight hours as much as he does now for ten. He is to be compelled to do so by law, such a law as cannot "be evaded by any artifice its opponents may invent," and the members of the league plunder themselves to "visit with just and exemplary action every man and every combination that, by opposing us, shows unmistakable hostility not only to the movement we are engaged in, but to the very spirit of republican institutions." Such opponents are also stigmatized as "monarchists"—"unworthy the confidence of the people." The meaning of all this is plain enough. By political agitation, and the offer of the working-men's vote (it has been accepted by the Democratic party), legislation is to be obtained to regulate the rate of wages according to the pleasure of the laborer, which happens now to be that eight hours of work per day shall sell for as much as ten hours, and all who oppose the plan are pointed out as objects and victims of popular indignation. Jack Cade went no further than this when he declared, "There shall be in England seven half-penny loaves sold for a penny, and the three-hooped pot shall have ten hoops." He added, also, what was a very natural consequence of the execution of such a promise: "All the realm shall be in famine, and in Cheapside shall men go to bed, and Legislatures can and often have played the part of Jack Cade, and when either they or mobs shall, in this country, dictate the price at which commodities shall be sold, the time is not far distant when all things will be in common and grass grow in Broadway.

If the principles above stated be correct, it is enough to condemn the scheme of this eight-hour labor league to say that, if executed, it would diminish production, for eight hours of work cannot produce as much as ten hours, which is now called a day's work. To diminish production would be to diminish capital, the fund out of which labor is paid. It would diminish capital, also, by taxing, for the laborer, a portion of it that belongs by natural law, and therefore justly, to the capitalist; and still more by the loss of confidence in the security of property and the stability of business that would be caused by the tyrannical interference of the Government with the freedom of industry and the sanctity of contracts, and by threats of popular violence.

Here never was a time when the plans of this labor league could have been more injurious to the working men than at present. We have shown that the rate of wages could be increased only by increasing capital or by diminishing the number of laborers. The plan in question proposes to prevent the growth of capital at the very moment when emigration is adding more rapidly than ever before to the working classes. Moreover, there never was so little excuse for such a movement as now, for never before were the laboring classes so prosperous. The destruction of war has caused an enormous demand for every commodity produced by skill and toil, vast fields of enterprises...
and boundless sources of wealth stimulate adventure to unwonted boldness, business thrives, prices are high, wages are high, all pursuits are calling more loudly than ever for work—free work, energetic work, well rewarded work. The nation calls for it, too, in order that she may bear the heavy load of debt and taxation imposed by the war. More than ever before is work needed and demanded, better than ever before is it paid. What is the answer of the working-men if they are represented by this labor league? "We will work less than ever, and must be paid as much for the work as for the large quantity. We control political power, and by its hand will add to our wages the profits of the capitalist. All who oppose us are monarchists, aristocrats, enemies to free institutions, and shall feed our vengeance."

This movement comes certainly at a most unpropitious moment for us all. The labor of two hours a day for the whole country would pay the interest of the national debt twice over. The loss of capital which the violent measures of the labor league, if carried out, would cause, would amount to a much larger sum. Only by the united efforts of labor and capital can we expect to pay the debt. Can we do it with diminished resources? To stop work is to impoverish the country and repudiate the debt.

THE CRISIS IN PRUSSIA.

Prior to the outbreak of 1848, William, Prince of Prussia, the childless King's oldest brother, was the most unpopular man in the country, being regarded as the representative man of the feudal and military reaction. During the Berlin street-fights he absconded to England, for the purpose, as his friends asserted, of studying democracy and constitutional liberty. On the credit of these researches he was elected to the Assembly after his return, occupied a seat there for one day, and then turned his enquiring mind exclusively to the art of war. In 1849 he was at the head of the troops sent into Baden and the Palatinate to subdue the republicans. Outnumbering their opponents ten to one, his soldiers won easy victories, which he has since vaunted as the most heroic exploits of the age. He caused about forty captured republicans to be shot down in cold blood, and distinguished himself by other bloody cruelties. During the reactionary period of 1850 to 1857, excluded even from the confidence of the camarilla, he lived in a sort of exile at Coblenz, on the Rhine. It is inherent in the system that the reigning monarch should suspect the heir presumptive, and the heir apparent grumble at the living ruler.

William L., who was born since 1860, now sixty-eight years of age, is of an order of talent decidedly inferior to the ordinary standard of mediocrity. Narrow-minded and stubborn, his education was more than defective, his tastes are the reverse of intellectual, and his passion is the army. For the soldiers he provides with paternal care, understanding the minutest details of the service, and scrupulously attending to them. The very ideal of a drill-sergeant, he is more interested in the number of buttons on a coat than in the gravest question of public law. The highest reach of his intellect travels over the same range of subjects as did his brother's disordered fancy; an observation to which the populace of Berlin have given expression by dubbing him "Lehmen II." At a grand review of the victorious Schleswig-Holstein army, in 1864, the King, observing a stalwart sergeant decorated with more than one badge of extraordinary merit, called him out of the ranks and enquired his name. The favored one turned very red, and answered, "John," "John what?" asked his major, "It is my fault, sir;" the man started out, "but my name is Lehman too, and it is the only surname I have got."

Nothing could indicate more unmistakably the unpropriety of the last years of Frederic William IV, than the fact that, on assuming the duties of the regency, his brother was for a time the most popular man in Prussia. These two years were the honeymoon of his reign. The abolition of some of the most obnoxious abuses, such as the Manteuffel ministry, and the suspension of the chancery of gens-à-armes and police commissioners, so perfectly suited the moderate political cravings of the people that they talked of nothing but the "new era," and acted as though they had reached the political millennium. They were soon to learn that liberties are not the gifts of princes, but the laborious achievements of the people.

The first apple of discord sprang out of the Italian war of 1859. In placing his army on a war footing—for what ait? or against what enemy no one could tell—he discovered that the "Landwehr," his main force, was ill-prepared for offensive operations, and still less for more demonstrations. The standing army, in which every man of the proper age was required to serve for two years, between the ages of seventeen and twenty-three years, numbered, in times of peace, no more than 120,000 men. The soldiers discharged from serving with the flag were attached for three years to the reserve. To increase the defensive power of the country a further body, consisting of those discharged from the reserve, constituted the "Landwehr," who were regimented and officered, but called to arms for about a month in the year, or every two years, only. There was a "Landwehr" of the first ban and a "Landwehr" of the second ban, the latter comprising men between the ages of thirty-one and forty years, to be summoned to the field on great emergencies only. The standing army and the Landwehr of the first call together constituted a body of 600,000, while the addition of the Landwehr of the second call would swell the grand total to about 800,000 men, equal to about four per cent, of the whole population. Of course the "mobilization" of such a force involved the rendition of the entire business and industry of the country, an inconvenience which would have been little regarded in times of foreign invasion or great public danger, but which, when the necessity of the step was by no means apparent to the common understanding, became exceedingly irksome to the people, and operated as a hindrance to the Government. Besides, the institution had been suffered to fall into neglect; the officers were inexperienced, unfit for the field, and strangers to their men. The whole was too much like a militia to be pitted against well-drilled troops.

To remedy these defects, the thirty-six infantry regiments of the Landwehr, instead of being drilled for only a month in the year, were kept permanently under arms, and practically converted into regiments of the line, and the number of the cavalry and artillery of the standing army were gradually enhanced to correspond with the increased force of infantry. The requisite number of recruits was to be obtained by increasing the number of years' service required in the standing army from five to seven years, three of which were to be passed (by the infantry) under the flag, and four with the reserve, while the years of service in the second ban of the Landwehr were to be reduced four years. The number of recruits annually raised for the army, hitherto amounting to 40,000, was to be enhanced to 63,000, and the first ban of the Landwehr, or Landwehr Proper, was to go out of existence.

But the Landwehr, in the eyes of every Prussian, was the most hallowed of institutions, the last relics of the democratic enfranchisements of the Stein and Hardenberg period. It realized the cherished idea, embodied in a law of 1814, that every able-bodied Prussian, without distinction of wealth or rank, is bound to defend his country so long as his years permit. It was the exponent of the equality of the citizens before the law, and the buttress of the nation's liberties against foreign and domestic foes, which had compassed the downfall of Napoleon in 1813 and had stood silently but powerfully between the Government and the subject in 1848. Moreover, the alteration was unnecessary. Its utmost effect was to raise the standing force to about 210,000 men. But the same result would be produced by recruiting the army annually with 88,000, instead of 63,000 men, for which statisticians showed the population furnished abundant materials. In that case, and if the time of service in the Landwehr had been set down as extending to the thirty-sixth year of the age of every Prussian, the latter body might have been preserved, the time of service in the army under the flag retained at two years, and that in the reserve limited to three years. It involved an increase of the funded debt of nearly ten millions of thalers, and of the annual budget of three millions. It would strengthen all the absolutist elements of the body politic, especially the landed gentry, who were its most ardent supporters, because they wanted vilenesses for their younger sons. It would tempt the crown to a coup d'état, by employing the very instrument with which such deeds are consummated, the standing army.

These were weighty objections, yet not absolutely unsoundable. If the Landwehr could only be preserved at the expense of the national greatness, it had ceased to be a sacred institution. The proposed in-