

the government pays, and probably the city will pay no less.

City Attorney Merritt, in speaking upon the subject of improving the Fifth Ward Square, expressed, in the same breath, the opinion that the conditions of the trust by which the city parted with the property had been complied with, but that a bill in equity would lie to secure its reversion back to the city. This may be good law to lawyers, but laymen will wonder how equity can step in to dissolve a contract, admitted to be legal in its inception and provisions, every stipulation of which has been complied with. There is something said in the Constitution about impairing the obligations of contracts, but laymen seem now-a-days to be more familiar with that law than courts, lawyers or law-makers are.

There is a suspicion that some workers for "Liberal" success wanted their pay; hence the enumerators. There is also another suggestion that a legal fight over \$125,000 worth of property would yield some fat legal fees.

Those who expected that unnecessary expense would be avoided by the present city administration seem doomed to disappointment.

## STRIKES AND LABOR TROUBLES.

The following is taken from an exchange:

"This was the theme of Rev. Robert McIntyre at Grace Methodist church in Chicago on Sunday last. The sermon was a vindication of labor; a calm discussion of the value of strikes and what they accomplish from a man who was born poor, and who toiled as a factory hand and as a brick mason for fourteen years, who belonged to labor organizations, and who personally went out on three different strikes.

"The reverend gentleman, now the pastor of one of Chicago's leading churches, said of strikes that they were a hopeful sign, a good thing if carried on peaceably. 'It means much and accomplishes a great deal,' he said, 'not in the way of shorter hours and better wages, but because it shows that our mechanics are hopeful.' Continuing he said:

"The serfs never struck, the fellahs of Egypt, knowing no hope of better things, dare not manifest discontent, but our artisans, grasping for better things, speak their discontent and demand what they believe themselves entitled to. I am glad I was born poor and very poor. Poverty is good in disguise, so it be honest poverty. Most people, the laborers as well as others, need either the stimulus of a hope ahead or the whip of poverty behind them."

"In answer to the question, 'What is the remedy for the trouble between capital and labor?' Mr. McIntyre said he did not believe strikes accomplished much toward the solution of the problem. It hurts labor more than capital. 'A strike is like an old Queen Anne musket,' he said, 'it kicks harder than it shoots.'

"The remedies suggested by Mr. McIntyre were:

"First, the election of men—honest laborers—clean, upright men who will see that honest laws are enacted and executed; the enactment of a national eight-hour law, and the restriction of immigration. Next, abolish the saloons; and last and greatest, live up to the doctrines of Christianity."

The wage-workers of the country and the farming element have it in their power to elect to public position any one upon whom they concentrate their votes. If they do not exercise that privilege then they have themselves chiefly to blame if laws are enacted which they do not approve. They can control congress by their votes, and send men to that body who will not only vote for a national eight-hour law, but for other measures of relief. By their votes they can regulate the traffic in whiskey, and they would all find the burdens of life easier if they became Christians.

## THE LOCAL LABOR DISPUTE.

The strike of carpenters in this city is unfortunate. It needs no reasoning to establish that point. Every condition that produces enforced stagnation in place of encouraging development is unprofitable, aside from the merits of any disagreement that may lead to it.

Reason and justice would soon, if applied, settle the dispute between employers and workmen. Why not have recourse to those elevating agencies? The first labor to be done in reaching a solution of the difficulty is to strictly and impartially investigate all the elements of the controversy and then apply a remedy by making whatever concessions are manifestly proper.

We hold it to be a self-evident right of a workman to dispose of his labor to the best advantage to himself. Any number of workmen combined may also rightfully leave the service of any employer, providing no contract between the parties is impaired by the action.

On the other hand there would be no balance to the situation unless the employer had the right to hire his work done on a similar basis, being the judge also as to whom he shall engage to labor for him. It is difficult to see how such a proposition can be reasonably disputed.

There is a third element in a controversy of the kind now in progress—those workmen who do not choose to belong to a trades union. That they have the right to take that attitude ought to be conceded, as any other position would be equal to a denial of the right of individual freedom, which is the inalienable prerogative of the citizen when his own acts do not place it in jeopardy. This being an indisputable truth, any conduct or process brought to bear upon him to coerce him into relinquishment of his personal right is tyranny.

These standard propositions should be considered in an investigation of the merits of the present strike, and that which crosses them should be discarded. If this were done there would be an end of the dispute within a few hours.

There appears to be no great reluctance on the part of the employers to grant the basic demand of the men—nine hours to constitute the time of a day's work, to be paid at the rate of \$3.50. As a rule this is readily conceded. Consequently, settlement of the difficulty is obstructed by other conditions.

Another demand is that none other than union men shall be employed. This is an infringement upon two of the three propositions stated at the beginning of this article. It interferes with the right of the employer to engage the services of workmen of his own choice.

It also impinges, by a coercive method, the prerogative of those workmen who do not wish to belong to a union.

There is still another element of wrong connected with this controversy, providing a common assertion, that is probably not strongly disputed, be true. The claim referred to is that many of the chief agitators in this labor difficulty are transients, belonging to the class which floats from one "boom" town to another. As a rule they have, so it is alleged, two conspicuous defects—meagre ability as workmen and a disposition to do the smallest possible amount of labor for the largest attainable amount of pay. As a consequence, if the employers were to exclude non-union men from their employment a settlement made thus would simply place them in a predicament, causing them to leap "from the frying-pan into the fire," in this way. It is held that there are not enough efficient workmen who belong to the union to meet the demand without the aid of those who do not belong to the organization. The result of this situation is inevitable—employers would have to still continue to go short-handed or employ incompetent "floaters," who are said to be not worth more than from one half to three-fourths of the wages demanded. From this it will be seen that the course of the union is of a nature to put a premium on poor workmanship by placing it, so far as remuneration is concerned, on a level with that which is efficient. It looks like a very incongruous state of affairs.

Some employers object also to tak-