

SECOND DAY, JANUARY 17TH.

Mr. B. PICKARD, M.P. (President), in the Chair.

The Chairman suggested that the public should be admitted to the gallery during the time the reporters were present, and this was agreed to.

Mr. Woods, M.P. (the Vice-President), at Mr. Pickard's request, read the President's address.

GENTLEMEN—

GENERAL QUESTIONS.

The following is the full text of the important address delivered by Mr. B. Pickard, M.P., at Leicester, on Wednesday, at the annual meeting of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain:—

The year 1893 was ushered in with doubtful prophecies as to what would be the trade of the United Kingdom. Some said that we had touched the flat bottom, others that nothing but ruin stared the country in the face. Neither of these prophecies proved accurate. With regard to the weather that we were to have during the year, the forecasts generally were falsified. Dr. Falb and other scientists predicted that we were to have a very wet year—it was to be wet in May and June and July, and it was to be worse in September and October; but somehow or other the very opposite proved to be the case. Instead of the wet weather we had dry weather. Everything appeared to go by rules of contrary, both in regard to the weather and the trade. By the time we reached the end of May it was fully demonstrated in regard to the iron trade that we had just touched the bottom of the inclined plane and commenced the return journey. Hope, which is said to spring eternal in the human breast, was revived; but what followed? Many statements had been made to your President by representative colliery owners and some Members of Parliament that there was to be no reduction of wages this year, but a tendency set in among colliery owners in Lau-

cashire and Derbyshire in favour of a reduction. As soon as this became known amongst the traders of the country the hope previously raised was dashed to the ground; and instead of the trade showing that buoyancy which was fully expected, a sort of undercurrent or swell set in which prevented the ship making headway. Almost every department of trade at that time had gradually shewn signs of improvement, not in a great degree, but so as to commend itself to the notice not merely of traders generally, but of those who had full access to all public information, namely the gentlemen at the Board of Trade. Later on Mr. Mundella, the President of the Board of Trade, acknowledged this view in the usual way.

With regard to other matters which deeply affect the interest of the miners of the country, great progress had been made up to that point, and to these I will refer later on at greater length. The Mines Eight Hours Bill was fairly debated at our annual Conference last January. Many people who were dead set against the Bill before that debate took place, made up their minds that those who were advocating eight hours for miners underground were on the right track, and gave their adhesion to the measure. A deputation, a strong deputation, met the Prime Minister, the Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, and the Home Secretary, the Right Hon. H. H. Asquith. I briefly introduced the deputation to Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Asquith, and at a later period I also introduced a deputation to the Home Secretary on the Coal Mines Regulation Amendment Act. We had favourable replies from both these gentlemen both in regard to the Mines' Eight Hours Bill and the Coal Mines Amendment Bill. Mr. Gladstone, in his usual manner, very politely referred to the measure, and to some extent committed himself to some of its provisions, and when we remember there are but one or two provisions in it, there were not many for him to commit himself to. So far as Mr. Asquith was concerned, he immediately pledged himself to render all the aid he possibly could. These particular questions had their usual run of luck at the ballot in the House of Commons. Bad luck attended the Coal Mines Regulation Bill, whilst good luck, as the phrase goes, attended the Mines' Eight Hours Bill. That measure got a very good place, and ultimately received one day's consideration at the hands of the House of Commons. The other great question which loomed before the country a year ago was that of wages.

#### WAGES.

This wage question, which ultimately assumed such large proportions, appeared to be very small in its beginnings. Dr. Smiles has written a work on small beginnings, or the way to get on. This wage question really was initiated in a very small way, but ultimately ended, as most people expected, in the men resuming work at the old rate of wages. This question was initiated by a few colliery owners in a rather peculiar way. I am inclined to believe, owing to an unguarded expression of a miners agent in regard to reduction in wages generally, and as to reductions in wages in particular under certain conditions within the area of the Miners' Federation—I am also inclined to believe that the Secretary of the Coal-owners' Association, along with two others, actually arranged for the first meeting of the Coalowners to be held. I have been definitely told that the colliery owners generally knew nothing whatever of the first meeting which was held in London. There was no report of that first meeting; the second meeting was reported; but even of that reported meeting I have been definitely told that only those who attended had a printed copy of its proceedings. You will see that in this

respect those who initiated the movement kept it almost in absolute secrecy until they had got a sufficient number of adherents, as they thought, to press the matter forward. I was told by a gentleman connected with the Yorkshire coal trade that there were only eight persons at the first coalowners' meeting in Yorkshire. However, when they met later on a larger number were present and agreed to ask for a 25 per cent. reduction in wages. You all know what resulted, viz., that a reduction of 25 per cent. was demanded at more than five-sixths of the collieries connected with the Miners' Federation of Great Britain off the wages existing on June 30th, 1893. This has been a disputed point for a considerable time, and I only refer to the matter now in order to make good one of my assertions. The owners asked for a reduction of 25 per cent. off the gross earnings when they declared it was to be off the present rate of wages. This point has been amended since then, and the owners declared it was 25 per cent off the 40 per cent. obtained since 1888.

### EMPLOYERS' LIABILITY.

Another great question which has been brought prominently before the country has been that of the Employers' Liability Bill. It was introduced by the Home Secretary early in the session; it was referred to the Grand Committee on Law, and was dealt with very fairly by those members who attended that committee. I along with your vice-president attended most of the meetings, and we did our best to make the bill such as we have been advocating for the last 20 years. When it left the Grand Committee it was much more favourable to the workers than any bill which has passed out of any committee in any previous English Parliament, and I am pleased to say that the Home Secretary has stuck to his Bill honourably through its varied and chequered course, not only in Committee but in the House of Commons itself; and on its re-appearance in the Lower House, after being dealt with so badly by the Peers. Nearly the whole of the colliers of the United Kingdom are united in this one particular thing—they require a Bill passing which will secure compensation untrammelled by any contracting out clause, or by any limitation whatever standing between the workman in suing for compensation for injury done to himself as a worker. This matter has been well fought out throughout the length and breadth of the country. Almost every section of labour has spoken out bravely, except a few (I speak advisedly) miners and a few railway servants who are connected with Permanent Relief Funds and Sick and Accident Funds. The London and North Western Railway Company's servants are evidently of opinion that they should be allowed perfect freedom in this matter.

All I can say is this, that any employer of labour who desires to put his employees into the position of the part owners of his concern in one particular department should go the full length and make them thoroughly responsible all round, both as participators in the profits and losses of that concern. If the London and North Western Railway Co. change all their conditions of service, and instead of them having servants, put all their men into the position of employers, then, and not till then, should they be allowed to have any privilege over the other sections of the community in regard to Employers' Liability. We, as miners, have always held that we did not want pecuniary consideration. We wanted our bodies protecting—we wanted to be placed in that position that we would be enabled to work for a living without the fear of being killed every minute on the ground that we had not sufficient protection during the time we were at work.

As a matter of fact and history, where the workmen to-day in Lancashire are contracted out of the Liability Act as compared with Yorkshire, there are more persons killed year by year than are killed in Yorkshire. Anyone who will take the trouble to go through the blue books, since the passing of the 1880 Act, will speedily find this to be correct. Whilst the Act of 1887 very much reduced the accidents in mines in Yorkshire, the same Act practically did not materially reduce the percentage of accidents at pits in Lancashire. Therefore, it is conclusive evidence that where the Owners are free to conduct their works without fear of incurring liabilities when accidents occur there is not that care, not that anxiety to protect the workmen, as is evidenced in the statistics that I have already referred to. Just a word more in regard to the Government and the Home Secretary. I am exceedingly thankful, and I am, I am sure, expressing your opinion in saying so, that the Government, through the Home Secretary, has brought in a Bill, piloted it through the Grand Committee, and through the House of Commons most successfully. That Bill has been before the House of Lords; and the Lords have mutilated the Bill. It was sent back to the House of Commons, and the Government, when dealing with it, promptly decided to reject all the so-called amendments introduced by the Lords. It has now been returned to the Upper House, and awaits their re-consideration. I would advise you at this Conference to pass strong resolutions denouncing the Lords and upholding the Commons in their endeavours to make the Bill worthy of its name—namely, an Employers' Liability Bill as against an Insurance Bill. Any so-called Employers' Liability Bill which allows contracting out of its clauses is simply a Bill in the interests of employers of labour, and is opposed to the real interests and requirements of the working classes.

### WAGES AND PRICES.

At the commencement of 1893 I congratulated you upon your great success in preserving your wages intact whilst surrounding districts and communities had suffered heavy reductions. South Wales had gone down, Durham had gone down, Northumberland had gone down, and Scotland had touched the flat bottom; yet with all the fluctuations of trade and all the beating of the waves against the shores of the Federation, you had kept up your wages, viz., the 40 per cent. advance. That 40 per cent had been a terrible eyesore to employers throughout the United Kingdom, and I am sorry to say had also been more than an eyesore to a large number of miners' agents in other districts. You were told, and I was told, that when bad trade set in the experiment we had been trying would be thoroughly tested. Only let bad trade appear, let fluctuations in prices dominate the market, then where would be your Federation and its principles? Well, the Federation, although buffeted and tossed about by the unsettled condition of trade in other localities, yet remains as firm as a rock, whilst those districts, if not absolutely shipwrecked, lost their masts and their sails, their compasses and their painters, and were left to the mercy of the terrible and exhausting forces of nature. Yes, political economy had full play in these localities. During all this exciting time, and amid the wild and powerful waves of a sinful competition, your wages yet remained the same. Your leaders received continual abuse; they were told they had no right to seek to maintain the wages of the men of the Federation at that high rate while outstanding districts were plunged into the abyss of reductions, such as were experienced in the outside counties. It was said that the terrible distress that would be brought into the Midland counties and the Federation districts generally by the continued high prices of coal, after what had occurred in South Wales and

Durham, Northumberland and Scotland, would eventually bring destruction and ruin in their track within the Federation area. Well, my reply and your reply was that whatever might be done in other districts, we had made up our minds that having fought for and obtained a living wage we were not going to allow the middleman, the coalowner, or the commercial agent to bring the wages down to the point they were at prior to 1888. You and I had seen the the distress in every mining village, and had come to the conclusion that if colliery owners and managers, and those who stood between them and the general public, were determined to give away the profits of the employers and the bone and sinew of their employees, then it must be done at the point of the bayonet, because in our heart of hearts we believed that the prices of coal could be so arranged and maintained as would give to them and to you profits and wages equal to a living rate continuously. We were further of opinion that matters could be so arranged that the general public had no right to be mulcted in heavy rates whilst the monopolists of the various communities representing railways, gas companies and the general trade consumers of the country should go scot free in the way of paying a fair and a reasonable price for the coal produced by you and placed in the market by those who found the means of digging the deep holes into the earth. We were also of opinion that the general public would not refuse to pay a reasonable price for coal, such a price indeed as would re-imburse the coalowners for any wages they might pay to the workman. In regard to the railway companies we came to the conclusion that they were a monopoly, created by law, and as such, should be compelled to pay prices for coal, which would pay colliery owners for their investments and the working classes for their labour in producing that coal. The other general industries, which there is no need to indicate here, who had been receiving for half a generation coal at less than cost price, should be made to pay a price that would more than reimburse the cost of production. In effect they should be made to act towards the colliery owners and their employees as they expect the general public to act towards them in every class of goods they place before the public for consumption. The reason why I say this is because the general axiom is that you cannot get your goods below the cost of production, hence I say that if an owner knows that his coal costs 4s., 4s. 6d., or 5s. to place in the truck, before it is distributed among the various customers, any class of trade who wishes to have that coal should be made to pay at least the cost of production, and any class of trader, any manufacturer, or any class of consumer who desires coal below the price at which it can be fairly produced, should be made to feel that they are not entitled to any consideration at the hands of either colliers or colliery owners. The price of coal, so far as I have been able to work it out, from the 1st July, 1893, until the 1st Jan., 1894, solves a problem which colliery owners declared could not be solved. As a matter of fact, colliery owners offered to sell in the market at a price which they knew, and which their agents knew, would not cover the cost of production, even if their workmen gave all their work free. That way and manner of coal selling cannot be considered to be fair trading, or to be trading such as to bring about a mutual return either to colliery owners or colliery workers. When it was known that 9s. 6d. per ton for railway work was quite low enough to ensure a fair return to employer and workman; when it was known that 11s. 6d. or 12s. was only a fair price to charge to the public for household coal; when it was known that in the iron industries 7s. 6d. or 8s. 6d. per ton was only a fair price to charge, it became a matter of deep interest to those concerned in the trade to know why any colliery owner, selling as has been suggested at much lower rates than these, could ever hope to make his collieries pay, or that his workmen would receive a living wage --

this passes the comprehension of all reasonably-minded men. I have it, gentlemen, on authentic record that the statements of colliery owners that prices have receded below the point suggested are not accurate. A gentleman who used a considerable number of tons per week informed me that the price of his coal had never receded from the 1891 price, and when he saw it stated in the papers that the owners were asking for a reduction because the price of coal had gone down so low that they could not continue paying the same wages, he was completely astonished. He informed me that the price asked at his place, with a canal delivery rate, was 8s. 4d. per ton for engine fuel. That price was continued down to the very day of the notices being tendered. He also informed me that the very morning after the settlement he had a note delivered to him charging the same rate as was charged prior to the stoppage. I have had information conveyed to me during the whole of the lock-out to the effect that prices had not receded in various localities from the highest point. As a matter of fact, it was the general opinion that prices had not diminished to any very great extent at all. It was constantly stated in the Leeds papers that prices of coal charged to certain customers had not varied for a number of years—that in fact what was charged in 1890 and 1891 existed onwards to June, 1893. The only reply the owners could offer to these statements was that so far as the general public were concerned—the householders generally—they could always get their prices from that class of consumers. Now, if they could always get their prices from that class, why not also from that class to which I have previously referred—the gas companies, railway companies, and the iron monopolists. Gentlemen, the reason why colliery owners do not press for the full return to which they are entitled from this very class of consumers is because they are largely mixed up with those consumers. Some colliery owners are large iron manufacturers; others are connected with large gas companies. The majority of them are deeply interested in railway companies, and to them it becomes a matter of scientific adjustment as to whether it will be better for them to sell dearly or cheaply, because it is putting money into one pocket after taking it out of the other. That is the sum and substance of what dominates most colliery owners in charging the gas companies, the railway companies, or the other leading or cognate industries connected with the iron trade. So much for this particular branch of the coal trade.

### HOW COAL IS SOLD TO CONSUMERS.

When we come to look at another feature of the coal business we are bound to come to the conclusion that a great deal of sympathy should be felt for it by the mining population. Take the case of Sheffield. There men who earn their 30s. per week are bound to pay on an average 18s., 19s., or 20s. a ton all the year round for a decent house coal, occasionally having to supplement this by some 3s. or 4s. per ton. Take the cases of Leeds, Birmingham, and the Metropolis. When it is remembered that during the recent lock-out the coal was advanced to the poor people in the suburbs of London to something like 50s. per ton it is enough to make one's hair stand on end, because during the whole of the time the lock-out continued not one penny more was paid for the coal that was got than was paid prior to the stoppage. The price of coal, as I have it recorded, was from 12s. to 13s. per ton delivered within a radius of 20 miles of collieries in Yorkshire, Derbyshire, and Nottinghamshire. Probably the same rulings would obtain in Lancashire and the other counties. Now, that same coal, or similar coal, was sold in London at 2s. 2d. per cwt. during what was called the coal famine consequent upon the continued lock-out. Just imagine—it was stated in a letter by a gentleman in one of the London dailies that this might be calcu-

lated at probably nearly £4 per ton before it reached some of the consumers. One gentleman stated that he saw a trolley load of bags leave a certain coal depot with the coal marked on it 2s. 2d. per cwt. Those who were in charge of that trolley deliberately rubbed out the mark and put 2d. per cwt. extra on the notice board. Now if that can be done within a few yards of the depot, what was the price charged before the last cwt. had left the trolley? In dealing in this manner with the question it must be remembered that a charge of 12s. per ton delivered within 20 miles of a colliery means 9s. 6d. or 10s. at the pit mouth, and the same class of coal when it reaches London is sold at the magnificent price of about £2 1s. 8d. per ton, with the possible additions such as I have just referred to. Now, when you put 31s. 8d. upon a ton of coal after leaving any of the Midland counties' collieries it is quite clear that a tremendous harvest is being made by some person or persons when it comes into their possession. 31/8 per ton! When it is understood that 15s. per ton will more than cover the cost of getting, the cost of demurrage, and the cost of carriage by railway to the points of delivery in the centres of the working classes of London, you will find that for every ton of coal the merchant in London or the colliery owner who deals direct with London obtains, at least 15s. or 16s. per ton as clear profit. Who would not be a London coal merchant at such times? Why to sell only 30 tons per week would mean £15 profit, and to those merchants who sell their thousand tons per week, there would be a fortune almost in one week's transactions. We say, as working men—and I am sure you will endorse what I am saying now—that no working man, no middleclass man, and no rich man even with his thousands a year, should be called upon to pay such an exorbitant price at any time or under any circumstances, either in the metropolis or the provinces; and the only way for people in the metropolis to meet the difficulty is for them to form, along with others, co-operative coal selling associations on the principle that no profits should obtain. Let them pay good wages for the work done, but let it be understood that except for the redemption of capital no profits shall be sought or required by any such co-operative Association. If that were done the consumers of coal in London and the suburbs would save at least 3s. per ton month in and year out. I am sure you will agree with me that we as miners deprecate the unjust raising of values whether we receive a fair share of them or not. All that you and I ask for is that coal shall be sold at a price that will pay the colliery owner a return for the capital invested in it, and the manual labourer a fair wage for producing it. This may be considered a lateral point, yet at the same time I am fully convinced that it is the lateral growth of any tree that either makes or mars its success. The pruning knife must be taken in hand here, and all such laterals must feel the keen edge of disconnection from the main body of the tree.

#### FUTURE OUTLOOK FROM PRESENT CONDITIONS.

With regard to the outlook in the coal and other industries, the coal trade never was so prosperous, gentlemen, as at the time when colliery owners demanded a reduction in your wages. We are told the proof of the pudding is the eating thereof. If any of you will take the trouble to run down the list of paying concerns, and of those concerns which are considered non-paying, you will find a very small percentage said to be non-paying. If you take the iron and steel industries you will find that dividends rank very high.

Bessemer and Co. paid 17½ per cent.

Vickers, Son, and Co. paid 6½ per cent.

Brown, Bayley, and Co.'s Steel Works paid 20 per cent.  
 John Round and Son paid 10 per cent.  
 Charles Cammell and Co. paid 15 per cent.  
 Yorkshire Engine Company paid 5 per cent.  
 Hallamshire Steel and Fire Co. paid 5 per cent.  
 John Brown and Co. paid  $7\frac{1}{2}$  per cent.  
 Tinsley Rolling Mills paid 15 per cent.

These are a few specimens of the work and the result of the work done in Sheffield during the past year. In regard to collieries—

Sheepbridge Coal and Iron Co. paid 5 per cent.  
 Cammell and Co. paid 5 per cent.  
 John Brown and Co. paid  $7\frac{1}{2}$  per cent.  
 Newton, Chambers, and Co. paid  $7\frac{1}{2}$  per cent.  
 Waleswood Colliery Co. paid 28 per cent.  
 Briggs, Son, and Co. paid  $12\frac{1}{2}$  per cent.  
 Staveley Coal and Iron Co. paid 8 per cent.  
 Fife Coal Co. Limited paid 15 per cent.  
 Great Wirley Colliery Co. paid 10 per cent. and 10s. bonus.  
 Lofthouse Colliery Co. paid 14 per cent.  
 Sandwell Park Colliery Co. paid 10 per cent. and 5s. bonus.

If you take the banking companies, you will find that the Sheffield and Rotherham Banking Company have paid  $12\frac{1}{2}$  per cent., with 2s. 6d. bonus per share; the London and Yorkshire Bank paid 7 per cent.; and the Sheffield Union Banking Company paid 9 per cent. The brewery interest is represented by Messrs. Carter's (Knottingley Brewery), who claim to have paid 15 per cent. It will be seen that, taking the various companies of one locality as the stand-point, and for comparison, that they have done fairly well indeed considering the parrot cry raised that every company was going to the dogs. I don't think there is any need to comment on the above dividends; every industry speaks volumes for itself. You can see at once, whether it be works of a producing, manufacturing, or distributing character, that each and every one of them has done well. I want you also to bear in mind that with the full knowledge that those companies were doing such a roaring and profitable business they had the hardihood to encourage each other in pulling down workmen's wages. If they will do this in the green, what will they do in the dry? There needs no hyperbole in this matter. The only way we can reckon up the action of those who have been immediately concerned in insisting upon a reduction in wages is that these men have a craving instinct not merely to live on the poverty of the poor but to grind the poor as we have been told a nether millstone would do with anyone in the course of its varied revolutions.

### LOYALTY VERSUS DEFECTIONS.

Last year I strongly advised you to be loyal to the Federation. The great faculty required at the beginning of the year, and throughout the year, was stability and steadfast confidence in the Federation. The events that have occurred have more than justified my warnings, but, I am sorry to say that whilst the vast majority of those connected with the Federation have given a loyal support, and strained every nerve to make the cause successful, there have been those who began with us who did not remain with us until the end. These men did run well with us for a season, in fair weather and during the sunshine, and

when storms were absent they showed a loyal obedience to the Federation rules. But on the first approach of difficulty their faith failed them, and ultimately they were lost. A good deal has been said in this world about a lost soul, but what can be said of a lost Trades Unionist in relation to his temporal salvation? The principle of the Federation is aimed at securing the temporal salvation of the workers, and the men who have the firmest confidence in that principle, and who loyally carry it out, will find that it is not a broken reed, but a never failing staff and support, and that in the long run his salvation is secured. The Forest of Dean was the first failure. One would have thought that the miners brought up in a forest, who were accustomed to high winds, low winds, strong winds, hail, and storm, and tempest, would not have been the first to bend and break. It appears that with all their training, with all their hardships, with all their actual seasoning, they were not a forest—they were simply a plantation of weak saplings.

With regard to Durham, one scarcely knows how to pitch the key. Those men were all tried Trades Unionists—men who had fought many a battle—men who had declared they were able to fight equal to any other men. They have raised the cry of “Nil Desperandum” for half a century, and “Excelsior” has been their motto for at least the last 21 years. Repeatedly they have stated in effect that they stood head and shoulders above all the other miners in the Kingdom so far as intelligence and applied Trades Unionism were concerned. Those stalwarts joined the Federation, and a great cry was raised as to what those Anaks would do when confronted with their junior brethren. Well, gentlemen, what have they done? They were like the great and illustrious sovereign who led his twenty thousand men up the hill, and led them down again. Yes, they did bring them to the hill top—they made themselves fully fledged Federationists—they paid their entrance fee, and they paid their contributions for a time loyally. There is no doubt that the men were with us—the rank and file were with us, but their leaders, according to their own admission, were terribly against us. The result was that after much doubting and fearing and trembling they declined to join the serried ranks of the Federation against a reduction in wages. They maintained that they had fought before, boys,” and were not inclined to fight again. They said they had tested the principle of fighting, and had done it bravely for 17 weeks. They not merely said they would not join us in the fight, but they declared that they would not help anybody else to fight. They not only practically left the Federation, but determined to assist the colliery owners, in fact, they determined by resolution not to pay any levy in support of the Federation if a lock-out or strike occurred. This they loyally did for several weeks after you were locked out. They point blank refused to help you in your distress, although you could fairly retort and say “Well, gentlemen, although you have not thought fit to stand shoulder to shoulder so as to meet the enemy, you might in common courtesy have agreed to support us to the extent per man that we supported you in your gallant fight. During your struggle the Federation made over to you somewhere about £40,000, perhaps more than that in one form or another, but certainly between £30,000 and £40,000 was made over by the Federation. Yorkshire alone gave you upwards of a thousand pounds per week besides nearly that amount by what was done locally by the various pitsteads; but no, you gallantly stood by your resolution and remained on the side of the owners; and if the expressions made use of by some of your leaders were worth anything at all there was a constant prayer meeting going on that the Federation might be defeated. Yes, it was a strange anomaly that Trades Union leaders could sit idly by

while their comrades were fighting their battle as well as their own, and allow the employers not merely to hit them and knock them down but to jump on them." Later on the Durham people changed their mind and they decided by a majority to subscribe the magnificent sum of 3d. per member per week during the continuance of the stoppage. Well, this continued more or less until the end—sometimes 3d. per man per week and sometimes less, but whatever the Durham people paid was thankfully received by the officials. What position the Durham men occupy to-day it is hard for me to say. By a large majority they determined to join the Federation; by a large majority they determined to continue in the Federation, even up to the time when you expelled their delegates because as an Association Durham would not subscribe to your rules and resolutions

Now, what shall I say in regard to Northumberland? These men, by a majority agreed to join your Federation. They also agreed to pay their contribution fee, and they actually paid one if not more quarter's contributions. One of their leaders was reported to have said in the press that they would about join the Federation when it was finished. Well, they joined it before it was finished; they paid their contributions before it was finished, and if they had been paying until now they would have found that the Federation was not finished yet. How simple some men appear after the event. It has often been said it is a most unwise thing to prophesy unless you know. The leaders in the North twitted us on two special grounds, the first that we had started a theory that was a chimera, second that when we were put to the test we should be nowhere, but be knocked into a cocked hat. Well, the chimera has proved to be an oasis in the desert, and the cocked hat remains as firm to-day as it was before it was knocked. In other words, gentlemen, the Federation started out with the grand idea to raise the value of wages so as to create a fund which would give to its members a living wage. That living wage was obtained; it still obtains. The testing day arrived. A general demand to lower that living wage was made upon you. You fought a good fight and in this case you finished your course, and you have received, not the warrior's crown, but the crown enriched with golden ornaments. We have no desire to boast, but we have fought, we have stood the test, and although some few have fallen in the battle and wounds have been received which may never be healed, still at the same time the spoils of victory remain with us, and it will be for you and your children to maintain them, and not allow yourselves to be robbed out of them.

During the past year I may point out to you that many events have occurred of a startling character in face even of what are popularly known as and termed the employing classes. The Mines Eight Hours Bill has been met by two classes of people by an absolute non-cessum. The miners of Northumberland and Durham have not merely opposed it in Parliament, and have not only opposed it in Trades Union meetings and conferences, but they have actually sent people to lobby members of the House of Commons and also sent a deputation to the Prime Minister declaring against an Eight Hours day by law. Those men, who are afraid to do anything, where there is anything of an aggressive character to be done, to strike off one fetter of the chains which bind the mining population have rallied shoulder to shoulder with the colliery owners opposed to us in this particular. On the wage question, which has rallied every honest man in the country in favour of resisting the encroachments of the employers, these men have likewise stood shoulder to shoulder with the colliery owners. They have not merely stood shoulder to

shoulder, but they have used argument against your argument, and told you to your face that they would fight you whilst resisting the encroachments of the colliery owners in regard to wages. There has only been one point on which they could agree with you,, and that is the matter of Employers' Liability.

### ROSEBERY CONFERENCE.

With regard to the Rosebery Conference and the terms of settlement, I have very little to say at this juncture. The Colliery Owners were evidently prepared to accept suggestions from outsiders, which they would not entertain from those of us who were considered to be insiders. Almost identical terms were arranged at the Rosebery Conference as were suggested to the Colliery Owners at the Mayors' Conference in Sheffield. Without your consent, but in the full belief that you would endorse what we suggested, we proposed, as I have just stated, almost identical terms to what they accepted before Lord Rosebery. Mr. Hancock, to his honour be it said, immediately agreed to our suggestion at Sheffield, but the other representatives of the Colliery Owners would have none of it. However, we went on from that time till the Rosebery Conference, and I am here to convey to you on the best authority that the Colliery Owners were prepared to accept suggestions from outsiders which they would not accept from myself and others on our side of the House. Well, gentlemen, we met on that memorable 17th day of November in the Foreign Office, under the presidency of Lord Rosebery. Whatever we may have thought before entering that room, we were not long in it before we found that we had a gentleman to deal with who would strike the balance fairly. The suggestions he made to the 28 representatives present were of such a character as immediately to bring about their acceptance, by your representatives at all events. As you already know, an agreement was ultimately entered into that the men return to work immediately, so far as was practicable, at the old rate of wages. That agreement has been on the whole very fairly carried out. A few Colliery Owners here and there have not carried it out. I don't think any of them have any real reason why they did not re-start their men other than they did not care for the experiment, and were not going to willingly and easily carry out the said arrangement. Some of these owners were brought to book at the first meeting of the Joint Committee after the Rosebery agreement. Whether by this time they have allowed the men to resume work I am not prepared to say, but I think I may fairly say the greatest offenders were in the Somerset and Bristol districts. I have no reason to complain of the President of the Conference—on the contrary, I think every praise and credit is due to his Lordship for conducting the business in such a way as to bring about such a peaceable settlement of one of the most awful and protracted lock-outs during this century. I cannot say that it was the longest lock-out or strike that has taken place during the last century, but I think I may fairly say that so far as numbers were concerned, it was one of the largest and far-reaching of any known to have existed during the last hundred years, or indeed, in the history of the world. I can only add in this connection that I strongly hope that the minimum wage will be agreed upon, and that a permanent Board of Conciliation will be arranged, so that those terrible scourges to which I have referred may vanish as if by a magic wand, never to re-appear during my lifetime, or the lifetime of those who are now living. It has been truly said that both sides got a good licking, and that they will never care to have any experience like it for a generation to come.

### EIGHT HOURS BILL.

I see from the agenda paper that the Eight Hours Bill is again down for discussion. In my judgment there needs very little discussion on this great question. What is

wanted is that we should strongly impress on the Government of the day that seeing the Bill passed by such a large majority—in fact the largest majority of any Bill during this session—they should now make it a first class measure and declare, if not in the Queen's Speech, at least in the discussion on the speech that they intend to carry the measure through during next session. If this Bill be played with for another session in the way it has been played with during the past session it will make it clear that although the Bill may pass its second reading by a large majority the Government do not intend to pass it into law, but to dangle it before the eyes of the electors, for what purpose is only known to themselves. When a measure of this importance passes its second reading in almost a full House by a majority of 78 or 79, it is quite clear that any Government is justified in furthering the passing of such a measure into law.

#### STACKING OF COAL AND LIMITATION OF OUTPUT.

With regard to the stacking of coal, I must say this is a most difficult question, and must be most delicately handled. Unless this is done, districts may be led into such difficulties as they were led into during the last stoppage in regard to the removal of the stacks of coal. Then as to a general holiday every Saturday, this has been tried before and evidently did not work well, and we want to be extremely careful as to what we do in this gingerly and awkward question. I see our friends from Lanarkshire are anxious to have a well known and defined policy on the fluctuation of trade and the regulation of work, so as to prevent unscrupulous competition. Unless Colliery Owners will join hands with us in this matter, we shall be constantly on strike in order to try to bring this policy about.

#### ALTERATION OF RULES.

I see Leicestershire, as well as Cumberland, desires the rules to be revised. One desires that single collieries should be supported who may be out on strike, or locked out, resisting reductions of wages. Whenever it comes to this that you have to interfere in the management of any district as affecting one Colliery, your rules certainly must be materially altered. If ever that comes about, you will have no Federation, but a Trades Union pure and simple, covering all the area now covered by this Federation. If that occurs, then you will want an alteration of rules so as to bring us into this position that you will have one fund, one payment to that fund, a stipulated sum to be paid to each claimant connected with that fund; you will want a new administrative Board, who will require full power to deal with every case coming under their notice; you certainly will require new arrangements in your local association, simply because there will be no local association worth their salt if all responsibility is placed in a central Executive. Everything will be centralized, and the work done from one acknowledged centre. My opinion is that you cannot work any large industry from such a central head. I personally cannot see my way to advise any change from the present rules. We now assist localities where 15 per cent. of the members may be out of work consequent upon any action taken by this Federation. If you go beyond that, you place yourselves in a position which means government such as I have already indicated, and which, I for one, cannot see my way to advise for adoption. In regard to there being a uniform contribution of sixpence per week throughout the Federation, well that is a question of no great moment to the Federation. If the miners in the Federation wish to do it they can do it now. If any resolution from the Federation will assist any local association to get such a resolution passed into law and passed into their rules, I have no objection to a recommendatory resolution of this character being carried at this or any other Conference.

## NATIONALISATION OF MINES.

Another question on the paper opens up a wide field for discussion—should the mines be nationalised. Every one of you knows my opinion on this question. I am not a miners' nationalizer. I don't think that if the mines were nationalised the miners would be a penny better off than they are to-day. The crux of the whole question affecting miners is not as to whom the mines belong, but as to how the coal should be sold which is produced in the mines and brought to the surface for public use. This question may be fairly gauged by what is now transpiring in the Forest of Dean, where Royalties belong to the Government and which are dealt with by the Commissioners of Woods and Forests. I see another matter on the paper is that of the Mines Regulation Bill. All I can say is that we were very unfortunate in our balloting, and got a very bad place indeed. It is to be hoped that in the Ballot next session we will be more fortunate.

## INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS.

With regard to the various international congresses, I am pleased to say that hitherto they have proved successful. They have done good in almost every way. We met our friends across the Channel. We have got to know a good many of their theories, and have taught them some real Trade Union principles, so that to-day in many parts of the Continent they are following our tenets and developing our principles. They are leaving Socialism, so called, and turning their attention to Trades Unionism pure and simple, in order to aid in ameliorating their condition. I am sorry our friends in Germany have passed such a bad year. Some of the best friends of Labour and the Labour cause have had to submit to long terms of imprisonment simply for taking action similar to what we may have taken in this country, viz., attending meetings where struggles have taken place without being concerned at all in causing such a struggle. Our friend Shroeder has already suffered one term of imprisonment, and I believe is now undergoing another term, and I may tell you that the great fault he committed was that in a district with which he had nothing to do, after a strike had taken place, he was sent for to advise as to the best course to pursue. He attended the meeting, and was ultimately arrested, and convicted of some malfeasance or other and sent to gaol. I believe his term of imprisonment was either eight or 12 months. As you will remember he had been in prison some time prior to the last Congress, and some few weeks ago it was stated in our papers that he had been called upon to enter upon his second term of imprisonment. Other friends who have been seeking to benefit their fellow-men in a quiet and peaceable way have also been sent to longer or shorter terms of imprisonment. Others have been expelled, and some of them are already in this country. One of these has recently been down to Barnsley, and has been assisted in some slight degree and sent off to Scotland, where some other Germans who are exiled, are at work, and where, I believe, he has also obtained employment.

## CLOSING WORDS.

And now, gentlemen, let me say in conclusion, that we have passed through one of the most trying years that any Trade Union has ever had set before it. We have enjoyed the luxury of a terrible lock-out, and many of our comrades have had to bite the dust. They have suffered hunger and privation such as were never known before. 300,000 people out of work make all the difference in the world in comparison with one solitary county being out of work. Whilst the men of one county could go from district to district collecting money to relieve their distress, 300,000 people covering a tremendous area was a different thing altogether, and

came to be dependent after a time, and that a very short time, upon public charity. It is only right I should say now, at the end of the terrible struggle, that there never was a cause, there never was an occasion, when the fellow feeling of rich and poor alike was so brought to the light. The poor in their poverty gave their half-pennies and their pennies; the middle-class contributed their shillings and their pounds; the rich people gave their bank notes and cheques; and women their personal adornments, in order to relieve the suffering and distressed. In fact, somewhere close upon £40,000 was raised by a generous public to relieve the distress caused by the lock-out, and especially among the wives and children of the men who were out of work. No words of mine can magnify the deep and abiding feeling that you have, and we all have, for such a wide and spontaneous uprising on the part of all classes in order to assist us in our time of need. All honour to the newspaper editors and journalists who have made this living wage question the great battle cry of the century. From the "London Chronicle" downwards no effort has been spared alike by Liberal, Radical, and Tory papers to assist you in your late trial. To begin to thank any one particular class would simply be an abuse of words; every class deserves all the thanks you and I can tender for the aid which enabled us, without boasting, to win a most glorious victory.

The year to myself has been one of deep anxiety, and has caused me terrible worry. As you are well aware, I was very ill at the beginning of the year, and although I got a little strength from time to time, the constant anxiety, the turmoil, and the bearing down of this great and overpowering trial was almost enough at times to cause one to say, will this ever cease—will there be any breathing time in this earth again for anyone connected with Trade and Labour questions? It will be 21 years come the second week in March since I became actively engaged in this kind of work, and during the whole course of my life I have never experienced so much pain, and at the same time so much pleasure, in any one year's work. I have often thought and believed that Solomon said a good many things that were well worth remembering, and well worth acting upon, but never so much did I think of the words where he declares that one thing shall be set over against another in order that nothing may be wanting; and it can be truly said that although there was a great burden to bear, the result more than well repaid one for all the trouble and anxiety sustained during the terrible ordeal. And now a word of advice. We are at the beginning of another most important year—a year that will be one of red letter days, or black letter days. If we strive to go forward and secure what we are aiming at, then we shall have red letter days; if it be otherwise, and we do not secure this, then we shall have black letter days. I hope for the best, but whatever the days may be, whether black or red, we should never forget one thing, and that is, that he that is loyal to-day, he that fights and wins to-day, makes himself the stronger for to-morrow. Let us be loyal to our trust, loyal to our local Trades Union, and loyal to the Miners' Federation of Great Britain. It has fought your battles, it has won your victories. It will win you greater triumphs still if you only remain loyal and true, and fight with unerring skill the battles of the future as you have fought the battles of the past.

**I Wish You One and All a Happy and Prosperous New Year.**