

**THE TRADES'
UNIONS
OF ENGLAND**

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The trades' unions of England by M. Le Comte De Paris & Nassau J. Senior

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M. LE COMTE DE PARIS & NASSAU J. SENIOR

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THE
TRADES' UNIONS OF ENGLAND.

BY

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1869.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

WE owe a word of explanation to the reader who takes the trouble of perusing these pages. They may appear full of special details; the subject itself will doubtless seem altogether technical. But we hope that he, like ourselves, will see that there is a general and immediate interest in this question, which we, for our parts, have spent much time in investigating.

In speaking of the work accomplished by the masons, the iron-workers, or the tailors, and in examining scrupulously the financial organization of their Unions, we do not undertake to write either an essay on industry or a table of statistics. Our object will be to study, without prejudice, a subject which it is important to discuss from an exclusively practical view. We take great interest in following the development of Trades'

Unions, because it is necessary, on the one hand, to face without illusion the dangers which may arise from a state of things henceforth inevitable; and, on the other hand, because we are convinced that in spite of these dangers their development may be useful, not only to those who expect from it a legitimate bettering of their condition, but also to society at large. We think that this new application of the prolific principle of association will not only cause material profit and an increase of general wealth, but will also yield to society through its moral influence still more important services. It will help to remove the specious and fatal notion that the interests of capital and labour are opposed. We shall show these, the two elements of public prosperity in every country, at one time engaged in an unnatural struggle, at another time, on the contrary, regaining all their influence by a happy alliance.

The examples we shall produce will, we hope, prove how completely these elements are bound together, and then, perhaps, our labour will not have been in vain. When a ship is overtaken by fog in the midst of breakers, soundings are taken incessantly, and the smallest objects brought up by the lead from the bottom

are carefully examined as a guide for the course to be taken. In the midst of the uncertainty which envelops the future of France, we cannot take too frequent soundings in the track of our neighbours, whose course is beset by the same dangers as ours. But if these inquiries are to be of any use, we must take into consideration all the details which can throw light upon this important question, which affects us as much as them.

Having, in the course of this inquiry, seen how institutions work in a free country, we have done our best to make an impartial use of the right, common to every one, of judging acts which have been the subject of public discussion between the parties interested. We hope we have succeeded in doing justice both to the powerful manufacturers, who by their intelligence contribute to the real progress of civilization, and also to the honest and laborious working-class, whose steadfast qualities are the strength and the honour of all great nations.

LOUIS PHILIPPE D'ORLEANS.

Twickenham, March 15, 1869.

EDITOR'S PREFACE.

THE book, a translation of which is here given to English readers, was first published in Paris in the spring of this year. It has already passed through six editions in France, and a German translation is in the press. These facts alone would surely make it well worth the attention of those who are studying the labour question here, in the country which has furnished the subject discussed in its pages. Even if its success across the Channel is set down to the name of the author, the case is not altered. It is not every day that we find young men of the very highest rank ready to undergo the severe, and somewhat tedious, labour of endeavouring to master the greatest and most difficult problem of our time. Many of us, who have been long engaged in the same study, are well aware

—and, I hope, are always ready to acknowledge—how much they owe to members of the French emigration of 1848 and 1851 for the light which their experience has cast on many sides of the labour question in England. Hitherto, however, that light had come from political writers, or students of the professional or working-classes, such as M. Louis Blanc or M. Nadaud. It must be now admitted that the balance has been set right, and that the French royal family has earned an equal claim to our gratitude. And this on two grounds: first, because the Count of Paris's book is in itself a very valuable contribution to the English literature on this great controversy; and, secondly, because it comes at a most opportune moment, when the attention of Parliament is to be called once again, after a lapse of nearly half a century, to the state of our law respecting combinations of members of the working-class for the purpose of influencing the labour-market.

The testimony of a foreigner, if only he brings with him patience, and a clear head to the study of this question, is in some respects worth more than that of any Englishman of equal ability. At home we are all

more or less biassed by our sympathies and associations ; or, if not in fact so biassed, shall certainly never get the credit of strict impartiality from those who take the opposite side. If any men could claim such immunity surely Mr. Mill and Mr. Thornton might be held to deserve it : that they have not obtained it, is clear enough from the reception which has been given in many quarters to recent publications of theirs. The fairest and ablest Englishman will always be counted a partisan ; foreigners who have taken a leading part in the discussion in their own country would lie under the same imputation ; but in the present author we have one who brings to his work all the requisites for forming a perfectly impartial judgment. His rank places him altogether outside the controversy, while his long residence in England has made him familiar with our habits and methods of speech, and thought, and action. He is, moreover, avowedly writing for his own people, and not for us ; and has no conceivable purpose to serve in England by taking one side or the other, or allowing himself any licence in deepening or shading away the colours in the picture which he has undertaken to paint of our industrial life. The question