

exercise on the status and comfort of the working man. There are no problems more difficult than those which speculative men sometimes attempt solving, when they set themselves to predict how certain given characters would act in certain given circumstances. In what spirit, it has been asked, would Socrates have listened to the address of Paul on Mars Hill, had he lived a few ages later ? and what sort of a statesman would Robert Burns have made ? I cannot answer either question ; but this I know, that from my intimate acquaintance with the retiring, unobtrusive character of my friend in early life, I should have predicted that he would have taken no interest whatever in strikes or combinations ; and I was now surprised to find the case otherwise. And he, on the other hand, equally intimate with my comparatively wild boyhood, and my influence among my school-fellows, would have predicted that I should have taken a very warm interest in such combinations, mayhap as a ringleader ; at all events, as an energetic, influential member ; and he was now not a little astonished to see me keeping aloof from them, as things of no account or value. I believe, however, we were both acting in character. Lacking my obstinacy, he had in some degree yielded, on first coming to the capital, to the tyranny of his brother workmen ; and, becoming one of themselves, and identifying his interests with theirs, his talents and acquirements had recommended him to an office of trust among them ; whereas I, stubbornly battling, like Harry of the Wynd, " for my own hand," would not stir a finger in assertion of the alleged rights of fellows who had no respect for the rights which were indisputably mine.

I may here mention, that this first year of the building mania was also the first, in the present century, of those great *strikes* among workmen, of which the public has since heard and seen so much. Up till this time, combination among operatives for the purpose of raising the rate of wages had been a crime punishable by law ; and though several combinations and trade unions did exist, open strikes, which would have been a too palpable manifestation of them to be tolerated, could scarce be said ever to take place. I saw enough at the period to con-