

the corresponding right of his employers. Both possess the same common nature; and it is quite as much the desire of the one to buy labour cheaply as of the other to sell it dear. But there is an amount of responsibility attached to the position of the masters, which has always the effect, in at least a free age and country, of keeping their combinations within comparatively safe bounds. Masters of a morally inferior cast cannot control their fellows. Should they even be a majority, and should they agree to fix a rate of wages disproportionately low compared with their own profits, a few honest employers, instead of incurring loss by entering into competition with them, and raising the hire of their workmen, would soon appropriate to themselves their gains, by robbing them at once of their workers and their trade. Competition on the side of the masters forms always the wholesome corrective of combination. Nor dare the combiners take undue means to overawe and control the competitors. Their amount of property, and their general standing in consequence, give them a stake in their country which they dare not forfeit by any scheme of intimidation; a regard, too, to the general interests of their trade imposes upon them its limits; and thus, supposing them to be quite as unscrupulous and selfish as the worst workmen that ever lived,—as no doubt some of them are,—there is in the nature of things restrictions set upon them, which the workman, often to his disadvantage, escapes. On him the lowliness of circumstances virtually confers a power, if he has but the hardihood to assert it, of overawing competition. And we find, from the history of all strikes, that he always does attempt to overawe it. During the last thirty years he has shot at it, thrown vitriol upon it, rolled it in the kennel, sent it to Coventry, persecuted it with clumsy but very relentless ridicule, and subjected it, where he could, to illegal fines. Masters have no doubt the same nature in them as their men; but from