

How Trade Unions Benefit Workmen.

What do Workmen Want?

GOOD WAGES, Short Hours, Fair Conditions, Proper Treatment, Protection from arbitrary dismissals, Regular work, and something to fall back on when work is scarce.

These are what Trade Unions can get for workmen and workwomen, and without Trade Unions no one is reasonably sure of them.

Let us take them in order.

Good Wages.—Why do coal-miners get 30s. or 40s. a week, and chain-makers 15s. or 20s.? Both sorts of work are hard enough, and neither takes a long time to learn. The miners get more money because they demand it: "Ask and ye shall receive" is an old and true saying. But why do not the chain-makers ask? Because they dare not. They have no Union. If one man asks for more wages, the employer replies: "I can't afford to pay more. If you don't like my job, you can go—there are plenty of other men to take it." And this is true. If a man keeps asking for more wages he gets the sack, and there is an end of it. A man who belongs to a Union has no need to ask for a rise of wages. His Union does that business for him, and a Union Secretary, paid by the men to manage their affairs, is not afraid of an employer, because his living does not depend upon any master except his fellow-workmen.

Men in a Union act together; and their Union often makes them stronger than any one master, and sometimes almost as strong as all the masters put together.

An employer may sack one man for a mere whim. It is nothing to him. But he will often give up half his profits sooner than drive a big Union into a strike.

Men who want good wages and think they will get them without the help of a Trade Union are fools.

Short Hours.—What is true about wages is true also about hours. A strong Union gets men good wages for short hours: long hours and low pay fall to men who do not unite. Why do Northumberland Miners work $6\frac{1}{2}$ hours, while cabinet-makers in East London work 16 or 18 for worse pay? Years ago miners worked long hours for low pay. Then they started a Union, and that soon made a change. No trade gets short hours unless it has a strong Union.

Fair Conditions.—What is true of hours is equally true of conditions. Men who have a Union to look after them won't stand dirty unhealthy workshops.

Black Lists.—When a man stands up for his mates, and asks better wages, or complains of an unjust foreman, the employer is ready enough to get rid of him. "Such men," he says, "are a nuisance in a shop." Without a Union, no man dares to speak out what he thinks. But if an employer dismisses a member of a strong Union merely for speaking his mind and leading his fellows, the other men come out in a body, and their Union backs them up until the "victimised" man is reinstated.

Regular Work.—When the master can make his men work as long as he pleases, he gets his orders done in a rush; when business becomes slack, his men can play for a bit. That may suit him, but it does not suit the men. Rent has to be paid and food bought each week, and regular money on Saturday is what the work-

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man wants. In all the trades where a Union has shortened the working hours and made overtime expensive to the masters, it has been found that work has become more regular.

Trade Unions, like nearly all other good things in the world, have to be paid for. Let us see what the Trade Unionist gets for his money.

He gets **officers** to look after his interests, and a body of mates bound to help him if he is unfairly treated.

He gets **Strike Pay**, if the worst comes to the worst, and he has to come out for better wages, shorter hours, or against an injury done to himself or some other member.

He gets, in many Unions, **Out-of-Work Benefit**, to help him tide over slack times. How useful that is, every workman knows. Moreover, out-of-work benefit keeps up wages. A man is tempted to take less than the regular rate of wages if he has nothing in bad times to fall back on; and employers are always ready, if they dare, to take advantage of a man's need, by offering work at lower wages.

Many Unions do far more than this. Often they help men to get work by keeping lists of jobs, or because the employers apply to the Union when they want men. Some Unions pay funeral benefit. Others give old age pensions to members past work. Others insure tools against fire. Many regulate such matters as the number of apprentices. Some send their Secretaries or Presidents to Town and County Councils, and to Parliament, and thus give their trade a proper share in the making and administering of the laws.

Remember one thing! It is the Trade Union in a trade which keeps up wages and keeps down hours; which makes the master respect his men and treat them like fellow-creatures. Unions are paid for by the members. Any man who does not belong to the Union when there is one in his trade, is robbing his mates. He benefits by the better wages and shorter hours which the Union has obtained, but he refuses to pay his share towards the cost of getting them.

Therefore we say:—
 Every workman and workwoman in the country
 ought to

JOIN A TRADE UNION.