

There is nothing but punishment to look forward to, and *men* cannot invariably submit to this when it is dealt out in a capricious manner by one taking advantage of his position.

7. *Scale of Pay.*—This is the real source of soreness. The men in 1880 accepted a scale of pay, and were for the first time put under a rigid system of scrutiny and promotion. The scale has been fairly and equitably administered. Promotion has been made contingent on good conduct. A man who has not a clean sheet is debarred from promotion for a certain time, and this rule, which I found in force, seems to me to be a just and reasonable one. Mr. Maxwell's remarks.

As regards the 13s. rate, this was a source of complaint a few months back. After examining the lists in detail I found only one man whose length of service would have made him eligible for 13s. The rule provided that *not more than* 25 per cent. of the hands should receive 13s., but not that 25 per cent. *were* to be paid at this rate. Not only length of service, but a man's character and conduct, would have to be considered before he was placed in this rank. It certainly is not a desirable order of things to introduce that, be a man good, bad, or indifferent, he is to be promoted to the highest position. Personally, I should be opposed to such indiscriminating action.

The petition has no doubt been drafted by some person unacquainted with the facts of the case, as the statements made may be characterized as untrue.

The Locomotive Superintendent is unduly blamed. All the papers for increases which are made on proper forms are sent forward to the head office, where the names and particulars of service are recorded, the proposals are checked, and, if due, are allowed. So far from standing in the way, the local officers rather tend to yield to the pressure which is put on them very severely both by their men and by persons who interest themselves about them.

8. That your humble petitioners pray each day's work done shall be reckoned on its own merits, and not computed on the present method of running one day into another—thus confounding the individuality of each separate day. Petitioners' statement.

8. There is no such rule in force. Mr. Maxwell's remarks.

9. That your humble petitioners, until recently, should sickness or an accident (in the execution of their duty) overtake them, were allowed half-pay. This is now discontinued, although notice has not been issued to that effect. Petitioners' statement.

The hazardous nature of their employment is apparent, when insurance companies (the Government amongst the number) charge Enginemmen 10 per cent more than ordinary policies, as it is termed a "risky policy." This is seldom taken into consideration.

9. The same rules remain in operation as I found operative when I took charge of the railways, two years since. Mr. Maxwell's remarks.

10. That your humble petitioners show the sister colony grants Enginemmen seven days' holiday a year. Your humble petitioners are given one day, and are dependent on the Foreman when they get it. Petitioners' statement.

An impartial and independent Court of inquiry, with open doors, is their only protection. They ask nothing unreasonable; they wish for nothing but fairplay and common justice. It is impossible to obtain either one or the other under the present system.

Your humble petitioners are fully prepared to substantiate all that has been stated, so that it may be ascertained whether their grievances are real or imaginary.

Your humble petitioners have not particularized individual grievances, as they would be too voluminous; but, as a body, they are suffering under all the hardships enumerated.

10. I think a greater margin for relaxation might be allowed in this respect. Mr. Maxwell's remarks.

*The Addendum.*—A circular issued with a view to the gradual reduction of hours where excessive seems to meet with disapprobation. This is apparently inconsistent, and it is only to be accounted for by the fact that the men who work overtime get liberally paid for it, and that they object to steps calculated to an increase in their numbers and a loss of overtime.

It is a well-known fact that the long-hour services are sought for on account of the pay. There is not a man who has a long-hour service who, if he desires it, cannot be removed and placed on lighter work, and his place would be filled eagerly.

It is not easy to make a short-hour service. Take, for instance, the general practice: A man runs four hours out, waits four hours, and runs back, doing twelve hours' intermittent work; or he comes on duty for a spell in the morning, does nothing for some hours, and takes another spell at night. In the first place how are we to shorten? Are we to send two gangs, one in a carriage to bring the other home, and in such case are we to pay each man 12s. a day for this service? Or, in the second case, is the man who is off duty four or five hours in the day to be paid time and a quarter for this?

I regret very much to find the querulous tone imported into the petition. At the time I took over charge I found a certain scale of wages recently introduced, which has been amended and corrected, not however detrimentally to the present employés. The House of Representatives had just at the time pronounced in favour of sweeping and stringent economies. The Railway Department had been especially pointed at as a nest of extravagance. The public demanded greater efficiency and less expenditure. The Minister therefore appointed the present administering staff to give effect to these views. Economies are never acceptable: they have not been in the case of the Railway Department.

The men took to their nearest superior as interposing between their getting higher wages and easier times. They are entirely blind to the higher powers, the House, the Press, and public opinion, whose dictates are being enforced by the Ministry through their officers.

I believe the officers have fairly and equitably given effect to the orders under which they have been acting.

The control and discipline of the department in 1880 were defective.

In railway-running the safety of public life and property depend on the strictest discipline being maintained in all ranks. The rules must be enforced, and the men must be made to obey at any cost, even if the officers have to suffer.

The evil influences exercised by irresponsible persons outside the department have, I believe, instigated a portion of the locomotive hands to discontent, and to make demands which, bearing in mind the nature of the services they are engaged in, and the wages and pay earned by the bulk of the employés and the other colonists, are not reasonable.