GEORGE Q. ERSKINE,

was born in the village of Winchester, New Hampshire, Dec. 15th 1827. Emigrated to Oswego County, New York, with his father's family when five years old. Received a good academical education at Mexico Academy in said County at the age of sixteen commenced teaching a portion of the year. In the spring of 1850 went to California by way of the Isthmus of Darien. Remained in the gold mines one year and a half, then returned to his home and commenced reading law in the Office of Higgins and French at Mexicoville, Oswego Co. In the fall of 1852 emigrated to Racine, Wis., and resumed reading law in the Office of Doolittle and Caeg. Was admitted to practice law in 1853. In 1855 commenced operating in timber land, Vessels, Cord Wood, (Contracting Wood largely at different times with Racine Road Co.) also engaged in manufacturing and shipping brick to Chicago. Has held the Office of Superintendent of Schools, Town Supervisor, was member of the Wisconsin Legislature during the Winter of 1865 and 1866. In April 1867 he was appointed Collector of Internal Revenue for the first District of Wisconsin which Office he now holds.

General report gives the subject of this sketch the credit of having discharged his duty faithfully in every office he has occupied. Mr. Erskine is peculiarly adapted to fill a public office. His general character is beyond reproach and his manner most gentlemanly — always obliging and ready to answer all enquiries on business in such a manner as to impress the public with a favorable opinion of him as a public officer.

ASHE R. H. NICHOLS, an old settler

was born at Brimfield, Mass., March 9th 1815; received a common school education; was first engaged as carriage manufacturer, came to Milwaukee in 1836, where he remained till June 1837; then went to Rock River, now Watertown and settled on 160 acres of Government land where he remained working the farm for a time, working at the carpenter business occasionally; buying and selling produce &c., was Deputy provost Marshal for Jefferson county, during the war, was Superintendent of the poor of Jefferson County three years. In 1867 he built a stave factory and manufactured flour barrels at Kaukauna. He ran this for one year when it burned up.

Built the same factories in 1838 and a saw mill, which he ran till 1870, and then sold it and came to Milwaukee, where he keeps a boarding house at No. 488 Main Street.

Mr. Nichols house is not inferior to any in the city or state as regards attendance or table kept.

Mr. Nichols has six grown up sons all able to provide for themselves, his third Son John having a good taste for literature.
There is no country that I know of where skilled and unskilled labor are so much on a par, as regards wages, as in America; arising partly from the practice of attempting to do every hands-craft work without any previous training, and partly from the vast amount of manual labor to be done in the country, requiring physical strength. The circumstances of every country regulate the wages of skilled as well as of unskilled labor. In Ireland, unskilled labor is inadequately rewarded, while professional skill is highly rewarded. This arises partly from the vast amount of labor in the market, as compared with the limited demand. No one feels more the justice of paying well for labor than I do, and as there is no country in the world where such high wages are paid for unskilled labor as in the Western States, there is no country where less reason exists for those strikes for higher wages, which we so frequently read of, among persons employed on public works. Convinced that freedom of action and freedom of labor are essential to industrial progress, I regret to read of frequent recurrences of strikes among laborers and tradesmen. Such conduct is destructive to the interests of the employers and the employed. Every man, no doubt, has a perfect right to set upon his labor whatever value he thinks proper; his labor is his own property, and, therefore he has a right to demand as much for it as he pleases, and should he not obtain what he demands, he has a perfect right to refuse a lower offer, and remain idle; but he has no right to control others. If others think proper to offer their labor for half what he demands for his, they have a perfect right to do so, and he has no right whatever to control them. As well as he has a right to demand a certain sum for his labor, so has the employer an equal right to refuse to pay it, if he thinks it is not his interest to do so. This is just the relation that exists between the employer and the working man. The employer, of course, must have profit on the labor of the working man, for which he ought to feel pleased; and the wages agreed upon between the contrasting parties ought to be received by the workmen with thankfulness, as that is his profit upon the contract.

The history of industrial labor in America is full of revolting scenes, riots and bloodshed among laborers, which are really disgraceful, and equally destructive to the best interests of all concerned. Though the employer is injured perhaps to a large extent, yet his wealth can bear it, and he ultimately starves the poor workman into submission. The general progress of legitimate industry opposes these disorderly strikes. If an employer shows a disposition to cut down wages below a level incompatible with the well-being of those he employs, seeking only his own private interest, they have a right to meet and remonstrate, but not to command or control, or coerce, public opinion, and the rules which govern the trade will bring him to a sense of his duty; otherwise the workmen
had better look out for a kinder employer, and he must sink under his own inconsiderate conduct. I never knew an employer to succeed who had no sympathy for those he employed, nor do I recollect to have seen the ring-leader in a strike overburdened with a stock of common sense, or persevering industry. A mutual feeling of good will should subsist between the employer and the employed. They should have no separate interest. They ought to form but one joint stock company, the capital invested by the employer being cash, and that of the employer labor—which is the source of all wealth.

I would say that an increase in rents and the prices of provision ought to induce the employer, of his own accord, to increase the wages of the workman, if the profit of his business could at all afford it. In times of unusual scarcity, the employer should and ought to increase the wages, so as to keep the working man and his family from actual want, regardless of his usual profits. But as the real friend of the working man, I would recommend to regulate the price of labor by mutual consent of both parties. In no case would I recommend a strike, as the experience of ages proves that it is destructive to both parties. In ordinary times the demand and supply ought to regulate the price of labor like every other taleable article. By demanding too high a price for labor, the employer has only two alternatives—either to stop working altogether, or remove to another place, by which those who subsist by labor must either starve or seek for employment elsewhere. This is an unpopular subject, but my anxiety to serve the working man induces me, even at the risk of rendering myself unpopular, to give an advice which I am confident is for his good.

I cannot dismiss this subject without alluding to another subject, equally foolish. I mean those factious fights that take place on the public works of this country and Canada, between Irishmen, and those without any cause more than that one party were born in the south, and the other in the north of Ireland—because a river, or mountain, or perhaps a road separates them—because one man calls himself a Corkonian, and another a Fardowner. Scarcely a week passes without a notice of some foolish exhibition, often requiring the interference of the military to prevent loss of life and limb, which is frequently the result of these quarrels, growing out of mere names having no reference to any real occurrence on which to found a cause of quarrel. When will the common sense of Irishmen point out the folly and disgrace of such ridiculous conduct?

It is rather singular how labor divides itself among the population of America, which is composed of native Americans and the natives of every country in Europe. The Germans and Irish make good farmers, and
when once settled down, it requires strong inducements to tempt them to remove; but an American is such a locomotive, from an instinctive love of travelling about, that the smallest inducement held out to him at the most distant point of the Union, will be sufficient to set him out on his journey at the shortest notice. Most of the Americans devote themselves to trade or commerce of some kind—they seldom work at hard labor. In towns and suburbs, the Germans saw up wood and raise garden vegetables; the Irish grade the streets, carry the hod, repair and build roads, and perform all such works as require the use of the spade and shovel; the working American brings the axe into requisition, which he wields with a dexterity peculiarly his own; and the poor colored man confines himself almost exclusively to the razor and white-wash brush—he also attends table and acts as steward on board of vessels.

I have before intimated that labor brings a higher price here than in any part of the known world, while in Ireland it brings less. Therefore as long as this great disparity continues to exist, so long emigration will continue to flow from that country to this. This inducement, apart from the low price of land here, as compared with the high price there, will induce farmers to seek permanent homes in this country, in preference to remain where they never could expect to have a permanent interest in the soil, being always doomed to work and toil for others, as mere tenants at will.

But while these inducements are amply sufficient to warrant the farmer, the laborer, and the mechanic to come and settle on the broad fields of America, I would emphatically say that this country holds out no inducement whatever to any other class not amply supplied with capital. One having money can realize more by it here than in England or Ireland, whether he lays it out on interest or puts it into business. But, to prevent disappointment to respectable persons seeking employment as clerks, teachers, engineers, lawyers, or the like, it is my duty to tell them that they had better remain at home. Every working man will improve his condition by leaving Ireland and coming here. The Irish laborer is well adapted to the laborious work of this country. When he is well fed on good American fare, he proves himself to possess a greater share of animal power than perhaps any other foreigner to be met with here.

As connected with the subject of labor, I might mention that uneducated brute force can effect but little, as compared with the same amount of power under the guidance of scientific skill. Unacquainted with the strength of materials; the properties of the arch; the laws of gravity; the properties of light, magnetism, electricity, and of fire, air and water, in all their modified forms, how could the engineer achieve all the wonders which are multiplying around us every day?
I could multiply instances innumerable to show that everything great is the result of educated labor, and that no work of magnitude was ever the result of brute force, unassisted by scientific skill. Hence the necessity of a scientific education—an education of every day use. This education will economize animal force, by the substitution of machinery, which works under the guidance of mind, dispensing almost altogether with brute force.

We have illustrations of this fact in Milwaukee Wm. Hawkins, of Milwaukee, has invented a stave machine, which makes from 5000 to 8000 staves in ten hours. It takes a rough stave, as it comes to market, planes it, hollows it into shape levels the edges, makes the grooves for the head, and turns it out complete, ready to be set up in a barrel. We have, in Milwaukee, a tub manufactory—seven men are employed to attend the machinery, and these seven men, by the assistance of machinery, complete four hundred tubs in ten working hours, with handles and hoops, and perfectly polished. Unassisted by the use of this simple machinery, all the coopers in England could not turn out a tub made with the same degree of mathematical accuracy, as any one of these. This is not the result of brute force, but of mind. A rocking-chair is manufactured in Boston, beautiful in appearance, strong and permanent in all its parts well painted, ornamented and varnished, and sold for the small sum of $5.00—all the result of machinery—the creation of mind, the child of necessity, and the consequence of dear labor. In England, such a chair could not be sold for $10 so as to give the maker a fair profit, and the journeyman fair wages. The substitution of wooden pegs, made by machinery, for the thread, effects a saving of time and labor to the shoemaker, which enables him to sell boots at low prices. Window shades and doors made by machinery are sold here at a price so low as to enable the poorest man to enjoy the light of heaven and keep out the cold. Wagon and carriage wheels are made here with great dexterity; the farmers have wooden axletrees, which bear a weight varying from one to three tons. Many of four wheeled carriages have wooden axles, made of hickory, which last for a long time. The farmer furnishes his ample waggon with springs made of the same material. Everything, almost, in common use here, is characterized by expedition and cheapness. Economy of labor is carried into every department of industry, even to the very scrubbing of the floor.

It would be well if many of these contrivances and the general mode of using them here were adopted in the old country. The gearing of the saw mills here is very simple and effective. The work done as great, as compared with the work of a saw mill in any part of Europe. The implements of husbandry are light, and exceedingly well suited to their res-
pective uses. I do not like the dumpy plough, but no other could be used among the stumps. The very axe and its handle are indicative of contrivance and adaptation. In some of the tailoring establishments, machinery is used to sew the garments, which duty it accomplishes with unerring accuracy. A good frame or log house is erected in this country with a degree of expedition of which few in the old country have an idea. The architectural style is rather handsome, and well suited to the climate, and the existing condition of the country where nothing is made with a view to permanency—economy of time, labor and expense, governing every operation.

Returning again to the subject of improvement in machinery, with a view to shorten labor, I might observe that the patent laws of America are favorable to the progress of mechanical invention. The exorbitant price of manual labor sets every one, who has to pay for work, a-going to invent cheaper modes, by the introduction of machinery; and the small sum it costs to secure the right of any invention, by patent, is an additional stimulus to mental exertion. Thousands of useful inventions are lost to the world in consequence of the unreasonable sums demanded by the laws of England for securing to the inventor his right by patent. Nothing could be more unreasonable than to tax a man with a view to prevent others to appropriate his property to their use. The law which protects any other description of property should extend to mechanical invention and copyright. The patent laws of England have a direct tendency to check the progress of improvement, by taxing inventive genius so heavily as to render it impossible in most cases for the individual to pay the sum demanded to secure his right. But in America, a wiser policy is pursued. The small sum demanded to secure to the inventor the profits arising from his inventions, induces every one to secure his right even in the most trifling article which bears testimony to his ingenuity. This accessible privilege has the happy effect of accomplishing an amount of labor which otherwise, under the existing conditions of the country, would be impossible. The scarcity of hands and the consequent high price of labor demand that the law should protect mechanical inventions in this country; as, without these mechanical contrivances in small matters of every day use, the price of labor would bear, by far, too high a proportion to the profits of the employer. Indeed, at present, the price of labor is not warranted by the profits in many branches of industrial pursuits. The price paid for labor by the farmer some time ago was more than he could afford; but the influx of labor from the old country will remedy this in due time. In a settled state of society, nothing is more to be desired than to see the masses receiving high wages and eat cheap food, but in a new country like this, composed, as it is, of persons without much
capital, the use of machinery to work and cheapen labor is indispensible. We, therefore, ought to look upon the influx of foreign labor, not as an intrusion, but as a boon. In the same light should we view the introduction amongst us of men of science, and literature, and art, and invention.

CHAPTER XI.

From all the facts stated in the foregoing pages, and from the temperature, as indicated by the thermometer in different parts of the State, we can draw inferences indicative of what the climate may be in the course of time, under altered circumstances, as well as describe its present condition. The chief modifier of climate, and the agencies that exercise the greatest influence, are evaporation and condensation of water, whose influence is felt in Wisconsin to a very high degree. The heavy dews, peculiar to the Lake districts, tend to equalize the temperature of the nights, so that the cold mornings, so common in the Middle and Western States, (far removed from large bodies of water,) during the summer months, are unknown in the lake districts, the amount of caloric involved in condensing the vapor exhaled in the early parts of the night, rendering the mornings mild and pleasant. Clouds and mists modify the climate considerably, obstructing, as they do, the caloric radiated from the surface during the night, and reflecting it back to the earth. Clouds and mists prevail in the neighborhood of large bodies of water more than in dry localities, where caloric is radiated, during the night, into space, unobstructed by clouds, to reflect any part of it back, and causing cool mornings, in summer. Hence we see why the temperature of the lake region is modified in winter by the cloudy state of the atmosphere, which in summer tends to obstruct the passage of the sun’s rays, and, thereby, keep the atmosphere cool. In the process of freezing water, a great quantity of heat is evolved, and while employed in the process of melting ice, a vast quantity remains latent; therefore, we are not surprised that our great lakes tend to modify the range of the thermometer, lessening the cold in winter, and the heat in summer. This is illustrated by a reference to the mean temperature at Fort Howard, on Green Bay, and Fort Snelling, on the Mississippi:

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