

SCIENCE.—SUPPLEMENT.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 15, 1886.

THE EIGHT-HOUR DAY.

CONSIDERING the interest which is everywhere awakened in face of the coming determined agitation for an eight-hour day, the pamphlet by H. W. Fabian, on 'Der gesetzliche achtstündige normal-arbeitstag' (*Social science publishing company*, New York), is quite opportune. It constitutes the first number of a cheap series devoted to economic and social questions. Apart from its purpose of concentrating certain facts concerning the development of legislation on this subject, it is perhaps noticeable as indicating the diffusion of the writing and theories of Marx. His philosophy is accepted as laying the basis for state action in economic matters. It is a debated question, even among the labor-leaders, as to whether they will be able to carry into successful operation their plan for the general adoption of the eight-hour day on May 1, 1886. This is the date determined upon by the federation of labor unions of the United States and Canada. Such a thorough-going undertaking has immense difficulties before it, if it is managed simply as an economic movement. Many trades are not thoroughly organized; large numbers of workmen have no savings; and of course, if a general strike in all industries be resorted to, there could be little hope of mutual aid. Again: the system of piece-work is a standing obstacle. This is seen in the case of cigar-makers who work in tenement-houses. Mr. Fabian, therefore, urges the necessity of combined political action: economic forces alone are not sufficient. Those who are perplexed and possibly exasperated by this movement should make themselves familiar with the history of the labor-day. Even so conservative an investigator as Thorold Rogers has shown, that, in battling for the eight-hour day, the workman is only claiming his inheritance which he possessed less than five centuries ago. The demand is not a radical one; and no question was ever more temperately discussed than this at the recent Washington labor congress. For more than a quarter of a century the working-day in Australia has been of but eight hours; and last April the anniversary of its introduction was celebrated by artisans, manufacturers, and government officials. All these united in a declaration of its success.

E. Y.

SHELL-FISH IN CONNECTICUT.

THE 'Fifth report of the shell-fish commissioners of the state of Connecticut,' for 1885, shows that the total area of oyster-grounds, for which application has been made to the commission (or their predecessors in certain places, the town committees) exceeds a hundred and twenty-four thousand acres. This, it is understood, excludes all natural beds or property owned by towns for the common benefit. Of the total, nearly eighty thousand acres have already been granted, of which sixteen thousand two hundred are under cultivation. Such portions of the remainder as are held for speculation, and not cultivated, revert to the state after five years, at the order of court, on a proper showing. In 1885 there were four hundred and twenty-three tax-paying cultivators, and the nominal price fixed on the grounds has yielded the state over fifty thousand dollars. The commissioners recommend the repeal of that section of the law which excludes non-residents from its privileges; as the local oyster-growers have had full opportunity for securing such lands as they could use, and, ignorantly or intentionally, non-residents have secured ownership through a merely fictitious compliance with the letter of the law. Of taxes levied, all but fifty-five dollars have been collected; the tax produced nearly eight thousand dollars the present year, and nearly eighteen thousand dollars during the entire three years. Much available ground still remains open to designation.

The experience of cultivators shows, that with proper dredging vigilantly kept up, and a suitable state supervision of the natural beds, the starfish may be kept under so as to do but little damage. A new pest was reported in the worm *Sabellaria vulgaris* Verrill, which builds interlocking sand-tubes with great rapidity, which, when numerous enough, smother the oysters on which they rest. One bed containing seventy-eight thousand bushels was nearly destroyed in this way; but it seems that such a result is very rare, as no further serious damage from this cause has been reported, and it is possible the loss in question was over-estimated.

The oyster-fleet of 1885 comprised 49 steamers, with a capacity of 50,525 bushels.

Mr. Bogart, the efficient engineer of the commission, reports on his part of the work, which is chiefly occupied with the survey of the state oyster-grounds, and the determination of bound-