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Observations on the
factory system.

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OBSERVATIONS

ON THE

FACTORY SYSTEM.

LONDON:

CHARLES FOX, 67, PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1844.

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OBSERVATIONS,

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LORD ASHLEY, when introducing his motion for the substitution of ten for twelve hours in the Government Factories Bill, made substantially the following statement of his case against manufacturing employments :

That the race of factory labourers was rapidly deteriorating, and, unless some alteration took place, it would "soon become a race of pigmies;" that the number of persons employed and the toil they undergo constantly increased, especially with women and children, being now three times as great as in 1815, and all this labour being "carried on under circumstances of peculiar hardship, in ill-ventilated rooms, amidst every noxious agency;" that the "very order of nature and Providence is reversed," by the "burden of maintaining the family resting almost exclusively on the wife and children;" that children become deformed and have their health destroyed; that "woman, by being employed in a factory, loses the station ordained to her by Providence, and becomes similar to the female followers of an army, wearing the garb of woman, but actuated by the worst passions of man,"—"they contaminate all that

come within their reach ;” that “in those parts of the country where this [the factory] system was exhibited in its worst forms they [the manufacturers] imposed upon women burdens during the period of pregnancy which they would not be obliged to suffer in slaveholding states [if they were slaves], or among the wild Indians of America ;” that excessive intemperance and demoralization prevail ; that “there is [ought to be for factory labourers] a time to live and a time to die, a time to live in the discharge of every conjugal and parental duty ;” and that he “could recite to the House many very painful difficulties to which women were exposed.”

This horrible condition of factory labourers he proposes to change ; and to effect this change, he asks for “a relaxation of toil, for a time to live and a time to die, and a time for the enjoyment of those comforts which sweeten life, and for the exercise of those duties which adorn it”—for a substitution of ten for twelve hours in the Government bill.

And his lordship takes these positions : that, as other States have interfered with the labour of children under sixteen years of age, the British Legislature should carry its interference to adult women ; that “machinery must not be suffered to run its course without limit or control ;” that the present evils are great moral wrongs, and therefore “the commercial arguments” he will not consider ; in other words, the pecuniary consequences of his proposition, even to the labourers themselves, ought not to be considered, but left to the mercy of Providence.

Mr. Fielden and others think all factory labour should be reduced to eight hours a day.

Most philanthropic men, if allowed to view the question as Lord Ashley puts it, without regard at all to the wages of the labourer, but with regard solely to the most desirable arrangements as to labour, free from all shackles of practicability, would suggest that the periods of childhood and youth should be spent wholly in the wisest possible preparation for the duties and enjoyment of the after periods of life; that women should be wholly occupied with domestic and social duties and enjoyments; and that men should divide their time according to the masonic rule—eight hours for labour, eight for ablutions, eating, and sleeping, and eight for healthful recreation, mental improvement, and the doing of good to others.

Has the most morbid hatred of England's commercial greatness, (the basis of all her greatness) ever vented its spite in a more exaggerated and falser picture of manufacturing toil and the manufacturing population, than Lord Ashley has chosen to draw? Has the wildest Socialist ever given the world a more visionary picture, than that which his lordship chooses to draw as the certain result of his ten hour scheme?

But let us examine the subject solely as the labourers' question, and let us do so as serious, sober-minded men, really anxious to better the condition of all labourers, and therefore careful not to injure any portion of them.

Eleven years ago, in 1833, the Factory Commissioners, some of them men of great ability and high

character, visited almost every factory in the kingdom, and examined hundreds of witnesses;—factory hands of all ages, overseers, masters, clergymen, surgeons, and others; and this, too, during a furious agitation against factories led by Lord Ashley. The Commissioners investigated every charge brought by the anti-factory party, whether respecting a particular mill or a neighbourhood, and took the evidence of many persons who were selected and brought forward for their especial purposes by the anti-factory party, not neglecting to inquire into every alleged impropriety that came to their ears from any quarter whatever. Their report contained a huge mass of evidence upon every point connected with factory labour, which had been given on oath by a great variety of persons entertaining as great a variety of views.

From this magazine of evidence Lord Ashley has drawn most of his materials for that singular speech, which, if he had been consistent, should have ended with a motion that women and non-adults should not be permitted to work in factories at all.

Now, every witness, without exception, who was interrogated upon the point, testified positively to the great change for the better which had taken place in almost every thing that concerned the comfort, the treatment, the health, and general well-being of the labourers. And since 1833 that beneficial change has been and is now advancing. Yet Lord Ashley must go back eleven years for evidence, though sources of recent information abound, and his anti-factory partisans are as active as ever. If the race of

labourers was in a course of rapid deterioration, the year 1844 ought to have served his purpose far better than 1833.

Another curious circumstance is, that, when his lordship was pouring forth his extracts from the Report of 1833, he most guardedly avoided one syllable that could lead to the supposition, that the report was of a character different from the samples he gave. Now I defy any man fairly to read the evidence in that voluminous report without acknowledging, it incontestibly proves that the labour of factory hands is far lighter than the average even of mechanical employments; that it is greatly preferable, and is preferred by men, to agricultural employments, and by women to service or any other ordinary occupation; that it is healthier than most other laborious occupations,—the factory hands, like the gentry, escaping cholera, typhus fever, and influenza far beyond other working people or the shopkeepers; that their morality is no where lower, and in many districts higher, than the other labourers, whether town or agricultural; that their earnings, their clothing, their habitations, furniture, and general comforts are greatly superior to those of agricultural labourers in their respective districts; that at many mills the education, religion, and habits of the hands are anxiously attended to; that in most cases kindly feelings exist between masters and their hands; that adults very seldom complain of the time they work; that (though all would be pleased with any reduction, however great, of hours, if wages remained fixed) very few were

disposed to have short time, at the cost of wages reduced in proportion; that their intelligence and independence of character are immeasurably in advance of agricultural labourers; and that with wise regulations for children and young persons, especially as to their education, the manufacturing population of this country must become superior to all the other labouring classes, except those engaged in the mechanical employments of towns.

I propose to prove all that I have here affirmed, by quotations from witnesses of every class examined, and references to Lord Ashley's own magazine, the Factory Commissioners' Reports of 1833; and then I shall show, that as there is nothing peculiar in factory labour, legislative meddling with wages, directly or indirectly, is utterly mischievous; that the Legislature cannot lessen labour, that its interference can only disturb the natural arrangements of labour, and thereby increase the hours of toil, but that there its power ceases—its interference with wages being mighty for mischief, impotent for good.

The Factory Commissioners of 1833 say, in their first report, that "it appears in evidence that, of all employments to which children are subjected, those carried on in factories are amongst the least laborious, and of all departments of in-door labour amongst the least unwholesome"—(p. 31). Dr. Carbutt says, "the labour is so light, it is more like play"—(2d R., p. 8). "Children are very fond of being employed in the mills in the winter, from the comfortableness of the warmth"—(C. Mackintosh, R., p. 62). Margaret Dickson, aged 11, a piecer, says, "the piecers are aye

making fun”—(Mackintosh, R., p. 74). Frederick Hough, aged 16,—“I have had harder work at trimming than ever I had at the factory. I am more tired with my work [trimming] now than I used to be then [when in a factory] a great deal harder. I was about 13 then”—(Drinkwater, p. 12). Edward Sansome, a

framework-knitter, venomously opposed to factories, admits “there are some factories where there is great competition for admission,” but thinks the employment bad for young women, because “it does not engross the whole of their attention”—(Power, pp. 2 and 8). Mr.

William Henry Parker, schoolmaster and Sunday-school teacher, asked by Mr. Power if the inattention of factory children arose from fatigue of their work, answered, “Quite the contrary: they are usually inclined to mischief, and fond of talking”—(Power, p. 49).

Margaret Layton, aged 23, a rover, says: “The spindles run better in the newer frames, and bobbins are less, and don’t cause the threads to break so often. I would as leave mind three of the newest [twenty-four spindles] as the two frames I mind now [sixteen spindles], and I think I had rather.” Thomas Worsley, shopkeeper, Stockport, having worked when a

child in his father’s cotton factory, an advocate for ten hours, says for the greater number of hands co-operating with machinery “need possess nothing more than activity and attention”—(Cowell, R., p. 15).

Rev. John Piccope, rector of St. Paul’s, Manchester, who had under his control Sunday schools containing 4,000 children, asked by Mr. Tufnell if factory children complain of inability to attend to their lessons, caused by over fatigue, says: “I never heard of such

complaints"—(T. R., p. 51). Mary Isherwood, a stretcher, married and has five children, says of factory children: "They are no more tired than if they had been playing out in the lane; they works no harder"—(T. R., p. 111). James Greenough, overlooker, aged 38, says: "The machinery [in factories] is so much improved that it is easier both for children and men." Henry Burgh, Esq., magistrate of Stroud, asked by Mr. Tufnell—"Is it your opinion, from the observations which you have had an opportunity of making, that in any great branch of the manufactures of this district the children are overworked," answers: "I don't think they are by any means;" and that he has never heard of such observation by others.—(T. R., p. 34). John Webster, aged 68, says, children coming out of factories don't appear to be tired, but play and run about "as if they had not been to work"—(T. R., p. 49).

The Commissioners themselves say, (p. 24) "It is impossible to read the evidence from Leeds, Manchester, and the western district without being satisfied that a great improvement has taken place within the last few years in the treatment of children. What ill treatment still exists is found in the small and obscure factories." Mind, *in the small and obscure factories*; those most resembling common workshops.

Out of 1700 witnesses whose evidence is contained in the reports in question, two only have asserted that the labour itself in factories is hard, or that it has increased. Yet Lord Ashley chose to say factory toil has increased threefold since 1815. As to the fatigue of children the evidence is conflicting. But the fact, no doubt, is

simply this: that with respect to young children (under nine) employed for many hours, whether in factories, workshops, on farms, or at their own homes, "some will be fatigued and some not;" that as to young persons, or adolescents, it is preposterously absurd to speak of factory labour as excessive (see 2d R., p. 11); and, in the language of one of the witnesses, "that the power of enduring labour depends much upon the supply which the operatives can command of the necessaries of life."

Messrs. Horner and Woolriche, (p. 108) say of the western district: "With the exception of the town of Chard, we have had everywhere reason to be satisfied with the general appearance of the children; they were substantially clothed, and had *every sign of being well fed*, and of enjoying good health. We have seen neither deformities nor distortions, except in a few instances, and these, when inquired into, had taken place before the persons had worked in a factory. To the question whether, at the end of the day, the children appear weary and exhausted, *the almost uniform answer* has been that in summer they are seen, full of spirit, playing in the fields." Now, I ask, is it probable that the hands themselves, masters, magistrates, surgeons, and clergymen, in great numbers, would give false testimony, and so ingeniously, too, as to deceive the Commissioners; while the anti-factory partisans alone tell the truth, in the sweeping assertions to which their self-trumpeted humanity gives point?

"In the country part of the parish the people have quite as healthy an appearance as the agricultural population. The women are not only robust, but retain

their rosy complexion"—(Stuart's R., p. 9). The people engaged in the factories in Kirkaldy appear in general as healthy-looking as persons engaged in other work within doors. No stranger could see the population there, employed at the mill and bleach-field, without noticing them as a fine race of people"—(S. R., p. 10).

"My own inspection of factories comprehends ninety-one, and I have examined above 500 persons on oath. It certainly does not appear to me, from anything I have seen, or from any proof adduced, though on this subject there is much contradictory [theoretical] medical evidence, that the employment of children above nine years old in those occupations in a factory for which they are fit is necessarily attended with risk, or effects *unfavourable to health*." "The due ventilation of factories will, I am persuaded, tend much to improve the health of the workers"—(S. R., p. 83).

* The Commissioners use the following decided and strong language, which Lord Ashley, as the leader of the anti-factory party, must have read:—"It appears, from the whole of the evidence collected in the northern district, that, whatever may be said about the delicacy of the female organization, and the inability of the female operative to endure fatigue, the female, as a child, an adolescent, and an adult, bears factory labour better than the male, and, in regard to her own peculiar constitution and health, sustains no appreciable injury from it."

Sir D. Barry visited the houses of nine of the men belonging to Blantyre Mills, Glasgow, without making

any selection, and “found that every one of them was married; that the wife in every instance had been a mill-girl, some having begun factory work as early as six and a half years of age. The number of children born to all these couples was fifty-one [nearly six to each]; the number now living, forty-six. As many of these children as are able to work and can find vacancies are employed in the mill.” “It is a general rule in factories that married women, living with their husbands, are neither employed or retained.”*

Dr. Loudon, speaking of deformity traceable to twelve hours' work after the age of twelve years, says, “that no instance even approaching to such a state of facts has come before me, though I have used every diligence in investigating that point.” George Wolstenholme, surgeon, Bolton, testifies to the general healthiness of factory people (2nd Report, page 9). Sir David Barry, in his General Report, says: “Amongst some thousand young women whom I have carefully observed, both in and out of their factories, and after having examined upon oath those who had known them longest, as to the existence of deformities amongst them, I have not met with one distorted or narrow pelvis. If there be any difference between factory and other adult girls relating to this portion of the female form, I would say, that in the former, in this country, it is more fully developed. Of all the married women who had been mill-girls from their childhood, whom I visited at their own dwellings and inquired about from their husbands, there are but

two unfruitful. The husbands are all spinners. The children were numerous for the time the couples had been married, and as healthy-looking as those of any class of the community."

The following passage from the same Report ought to have been well weighed by Lord Ashley, and it will serve to show that wild speculation is as little fitted for legislation about factories as it is about anything else:—"Young persons, especially females who have begun mill-work at from ten to twelve, independently of their becoming much more expert artists, preserve their health better, and possess sounder feet and legs at twenty-five, than those who have commenced from thirteen to sixteen and upwards."

Dr. Loudon, visiting Taylor's factory, Leicester, found the women earning 10s. per week, well dressed, with comfortable cloaks and bonnets; rooms well ventilated; other factories similar; morals as good as others; no class of people in Leicester "who are better off than those employed in this factory;" the condition of the factory people, comparatively speaking, is good. At Nottingham he found it rare for "a mother who has above a couple of children working in a mill." Of another mill, he says: "Never did I see so many healthy young women together, although the temperature was about 85." Dr. James Williamson, of Leeds, says: "The woollen manufacture I consider generally to be healthy." "It has always appeared to me that the part of the operative population which is not employed in factories, especially those who have sedentary occupa-

tions, such as glove-makers, tailors, and the like, are more frequently attacked with disease." "With few exceptions, their occupations do not encourage injurious attitudes of the person."

On the subject of that wildest of the charges of the anti-factory party — deterioration of the race — Dr. Williamson, a superior man, careful in what he affirms of a population with whom he is familiar, says: "The opinions which have been hazarded on this subject are merely hypothetical. Under careful regulation, the system of mill employment might be rendered very conducive to the health and moral and social amelioration of the people." Dr. Hunter, of Leeds, says: "I wish to give an opinion with great caution as to the relative health of the manufacturing and agricultural population." "I am convinced, however, that great fallacy exists in the statements usually made on these points. Pure air is a very good thing, but man cannot live upon air alone; it will procure an appetite, but will not appease it." "The paler appearance of the inhabitants of towns, and of those working under cover, proceeds from natural causes, and is by no means incompatible with good health. I have often been surprised to see grave arguments founded on such appearances." "There is no kind of business in which there is not some danger to health, or life, or limb." "The sons of the highest men in the land, and students of every description who wish to distinguish themselves, are obliged to fag as hard, and in a manner perhaps more injurious to health, than most apprentices to any business, including factories." "Mr. Wildsmith, surgeon, of Leeds,

thinks "there is no disease which is purely caused by [woollen] factory labour." Mr. Beaumont, surgeon, of Bradford, attributes the worst diseases of children in factories to the want of ventilation, cleanliness, properly selected overlookers, and proper regulations in the factories where they occur. Dr. Hawkins (Report, p. 3) says: "The factories experienced a remarkable degree of freedom from cholera; the returns from the whole of my district establish this advantage." Mr. Holland, surgeon, of Knutsford, says, "The health of the children is generally good," being "well fed, well clothed, and comfortably lodged." Mr. Mann, surgeon, of Manchester, is "aware that much greater evils exist in the unwholesome diet, insufficient clothing and bedding, dirty apartments, and immoral habits, than what arises from factory labour." John Stephen, aged 38 years, manager of a mill, Glasgow, "remarked particularly in 1831 and 1832, when typhus fever prevailed, and was so fatal in Glasgow, that, although many of the workers were affected with it, he knew of no deaths; and also, when cholera followed in 1832, that no other class of persons so generally escaped as those employed in factories." Mr. Drinkwater, in his Report on Yorkshire, says, "The returns procured by Mr. Thorpe justify the assertion that the mortality of Leeds has diminished since 1801, at which time there were scarcely any factories established there." "I beg to be understood in all that I have said [on health of factory people] as merely indicating the extravagance of the statements that have been made with regard to the mischievous effects of factory labour on health, and

the insufficiency of the evidence on which they rest John Redman, overseer of the poor, Manchester "thinks the persons brought up in factories do not enjoy worse health than other classes of working people in manufacturing towns." Mr. Cope, of Manchester, says: "I have worked in about eight factories during 42 years of my life. I cannot say that there is much difference between the health of children employed in factories and that of children employed out of factories." Mr. Wood says: "I do not think children employed in mills are worse in health than children employed out of mills. There are children sickly among both, and children neglected by their parents among both. I began at eight years of age to work in mills. I am now fifty-two. I am now a farmer. I was lustier in mills than I am now. My health was better in mills than it is now." Mr. Entwistle says: "Since my children have worked in the mill they have had very good health; better than they enjoyed before." Mr. Rowbotham, asked by Mr. Cowell, if he had observed any bad effects on his children from factory work, answered, "None whatever; I think they are as healthy as they would have been in any employment that I know of." "I have been running over in my mind many branches of occupation in Manchester, and I cannot think of one which occurs to me as more healthy than a factory life." George Smith, aged fifty-three, Stockport, says: "I have perceived a good effect in cases where children of distressed parents, and who have been badly clothed, lodged, and fed, have come into our warm room, and got better nourished."

George Oldfield, a collector of cottage rents, Stockport, says that the factory hands are more temperate, that they have more comfort in their cottages, that they have more and better furniture, that their appearance is better, that they are more cleanly, and that their habits in other respects are much the same as others—(Cowell, p. 73). Sarah Parkin, aged 34, says: “My health is good.” “I can sew and do everything, as far as I know, that is necessary in a house.” “There are plenty of opportunities to learn everything if girls like.” “Those who go to school are better than those who don’t.” Language in factories “is a deal better now than when I was a girl.”

Joseph Shipley, aged 47, machine-maker, Manchester, sworn and examined by Mr. Tufnell; asked if present machinery is less liable to produce deformity than the former, answers, “Yes.” “Is that the general opinion?”—“Yes; that is the general opinion.” “Then, why do you hear so much talk about deformities caused by working at the machinery?”—“*They cannot prove it now.* You may rip up a deal of these old hands what were deformed at these old machines; but I look upon it that the cotton trade makes *fewer* cripples than any other trade going.” “But people are all saying the children are deformed from overwork?”—“Well, it is as I tell you; those as is took care of are as healthy as at any other trade.” John Butcher, overseer of the poor, Manchester, says: “I think, upon the whole, factory people do not require so much relief as other persons in my district; when compared with hand-loom weavers and other operatives, they are much

more comfortable." Isaac Collinge and James Travis, Rochdale, began work in a cotton-mill as piecers at the age of 7; testify to the great improvement of factories; "think that children in factories are better used than children employed in most trades in this neighbourhood." Ralph Stanley, overseer of Goston, says, "Those who work in factories are a great deal" best off of the people. "The hatters could not support themselves was it not for sending their children to the factories;" the houses of the factory people "are better, they are kept cleaner, and are as well furnished in every way;" they live "better than farmers in general;" the factory children are as healthy as other children; Sarah Billington, and four children, formerly in the workhouse, put into a factory, where their joint earnings are upwards of 30s. a-week; people are anxious to get employment in the factory; defaulters frequently say, "If you could get me employment in the factory, I could pay the rate as well as other people. Were it not for the factory farmers could not support the poor." Rev. H. Ailkin, incumbent of Hyde, says, "I was previously much prejudiced against it [factory labour], inasmuch as I had heard of the dreadful immorality that was practised in such districts; but, upon inquiry and observation, I do not see that working in factories has a greater tendency to generate immorality than working at a plough, provided the master would put his mill under proper regulations." In answer to the question, what regulations he would suggest, he thought an infant school should be attached to each factory, and a national school as a centre to receive

them after they arrive at a certain age. The ten hour bill "would undoubtedly decrease their wages." "Before I had visited the mills I was so prejudiced on the subject that I signed a petition in favour of the ten hour bill; but, since I have become better acquainted with them, my opinion has changed, and I think them as well treated in factories as in any other employment." Charles Clegg, overseer of Heap, says: "I think factory operatives are better off than any other class, except, perhaps, general mechanics." Joseph Hutton, surgeon, Staley-bridge, from thirty-eight years' experience, states that the factory women are as prolific as those of other classes; that the factory classes are not more addicted to spirits than other artisans; that the children of factory operatives, *if well treated in infancy*, are not inferior in stature to those of other classes; that "factory life has no tendency to check the complete growth in females who have attained the age of puberty, nor of males of moderate habits;" that he has "known children from the age of 9 to 13, and the youth of both sexes from 13 to 18, work twelve or thirteen hours per day without any detriment to their health, within my experience." Since his residence at Staley-bridge there has been an increase from 1600 to 14,000 persons; the place is more healthy, "as now the place is improved and more cleanly." "With regard to the influenza which prevailed much here a short time back, more of those that I attended were attacked out of the factories than in; since the factory system, fever has prevailed less in proportion to increase of population; a great many Irish have

been brought over here, and their condition is shortly much improved by the change, as I can see by their dress and appearance." Peter Hawker, solicitor and clerk to the acting magistrates of Whitminster, states that the children are not overworked or ill treated; that "cases of bastardy occur amongst the agricultural servants and those in domestic families as frequently as amongst the workpeople employed in the mills;" that the wages are superior in woollen factories to agricultural wages; with the exception of the weavers, "the servants in woollen manufactories appear as healthy and robust as any people whatever." Henry Burgh, acting magistrate of Stroud between thirty and forty years, states that he does not think children are worked to the injury of health or morals; that he thinks the general moral character of factory people is as good as that of the agricultural population; that he thinks the manufacturing population, compared with the agricultural, superior as regards lodging, food, and clothing. Donald Maclean, woollen manufacturer, considers his hands "a moral and religious class of people," and "the general condition of the manufacturing labourers superior to the agricultural." Thomas Jones, woollen manufacturer, states that manufacturing labourers, compared with the agricultural, "are certainly decidedly better off" in point of lodging, food, and clothing, many agricultural labourers working for him; and that the moral character of manufacturing labourers is better, and their attendance at church more regular, than with agricultural labourers. Obadiah Wathen, woollen manufacturer, states that his

hands are "a sober, well-conducted class of persons, and usually attend divine worship." James Dutton and Richard Lewis, of Wotton Underbridge, state that the manufacturing population, compared with the agricultural, are better in moral character, and decidedly more intellectual and orderly. Samuel Payne, woolspinner, aged 45, has enjoyed good health all his life; persons in the cloth trade are as healthy as those in any other business; has a son in the factory, who enjoys good health; children are not overworked. Mr. Horner says of Messrs. Wilkins and Co.'s mill at Bath: "We did not find one young person with an unhealthy look, and their general appearance neither indicated overwork nor scanty food. Here, as in other parts of the clothing district which we have visited, the children are well clothed; a factory child in rags has not once met our eye." Charles Mead, operative spinner, Frome, began work at seven years of age; always had his health; has a wife and four children, who between seven and eight followed him to the factory, and preserve their health; has difficulty to get his own children in from their play to go to bed; ten hour bill would be hurtful to hands; kindly feelings exist between masters and workmen; masters look after the comfort, education, and health of their hands. Elizabeth Gray, aged 58, Bruton silk-mills, has had good health all her life: "I never see any one in a silk-mill who is worse off than other people;" does not think young children are worked to the injury of their health; after leaving off work "they goes to play in the field opposite." "Do you think

there is a kindly good feeling between the masters and the people they employ ?"—“ Yes, sure, sir, very good indeed.” “ Do the masters look after their workpeople when they are ill, and send doctors to them ?”—“ Yes, sure ; I know both my masters have.” Amy Parker, aged 50, makes a similar statement, with the addition that her master, when his people are ill, supports them “ from his own house,” they having what they want “ for the asking.” Elijah Burh, solicitor, Trowbridge, states that the health of the children in the factories of this town is not injured by the time they work ; that “ the condition of the manufacturer is very superior to the agricultural labourer,” in respect to lodging, food, and clothing ; that masters have encouraged education, and subscribed liberally to a British free school. Joseph Scott, a slubber, aged 35, delicate when a boy, but improved in the factory, and has become perfectly healthy. Charlotte Lindsey, began as a piecer at seven ; is married and has three children ; says : “ I warrant there is not a better master in all the world than mine.” John Chapman, a slubber, aged 44, entered a factory between seven and eight years of age ; had fair health ; has four children in the factory, whose health has been good ; he is “ sure that Mr. Cooper is very much beloved by his workpeople ; he is always a very good master.” Messrs. Horner and Woolriche, in their report (p. 103), speak of Mr. Ward’s silk-mill at Deverill as being in every way favourable to the health of the hands, who are mostly females and children. “ No one could visit this mill without being convinced that an employment so clean, in rooms airy

in summer, and provided with stoves for winter, could do no injury to any one occupied in it for a reasonable number of hours ; we found nothing in the appearance of the children which indicated that working eleven hours a-day, exclusive of the intervals of meals, had in any degree injured their health or growth. We happened to be there at six in the evening, the time when the night set of hands came to work, and several whom we saw had quite as healthy an appearance as the rest." Mr. Ward himself speaks of the good moral character of his hands, and says there has been a marked improvement during the last ten years.

Samuel Holt, aged 40, John Rowbotham, aged 44, and Joseph Gaskell, aged 51, asked by Mr. Cowell if the operatives desired abridgement of time, answered :—"We are not desirous of any such abridgment ; we are certain it would diminish wages." George Lees, manager of Thomas Robinson, Stockport, examined by Mr. Tufnell, says, "I believe the delegates tell them [the hands in factories] if they work shorter hours they will get better wages." James Longston, overlooker, and Henry Haywood, manager of a mill, Stockport, state that very few of the hands are favorable to the ten-hour bill, "and those that are in favor of it are led on by the delegates." The Chief Commissioners say (R. p. 35), "It appears to be the general opinion of the operatives that though wages may in the first instance fall, from reduction of the hours of labour, the artificial scarcity of commodities thus occasioned will effect a rise of prices, and a consequent rise of wages ; as well as an increase of work for hands

which are now partially out of employ, by occasioning the erection of new establishments to supply the deficiency of production caused by diminution of labour" from reduced hours. John Hannam, Leeds, says, "I think it advisable to restrict machinery, so as not to throw people out of employment;" "many think machinery should be done away with altogether. Some say only such machinery as takes away manual labour should be done away with." "I want the hours shorter, to give a chance of work for those who are willing and able to work." "If it should be found that many are still out of work, they should be brought down to nine or eight [hours], so as to give employment to all." "The shorter time a man works, the more he will get for his labour for that time in proportion." "As soon as the master found that did not answer, he would give over buying machinery, and let the labour be done by hand." "There are various opinions, but I think this is the general one among us that I have told you." Mary Tindal (Stuart, p. 25), aged 18, says, "she would rather go on with the present hours than lose a penny of her wages." James Mitchell, Arbroath, aged 23, says, "that he does not care about shorter hours." Elizabeth Brown, Glasgow, aged 19, says, "she is no needing for short hours, but quite weel content." Mr. Stuart (p. 123) says, "I very much doubt whether, if the workers throughout Scotland were polled, a majority of them, delivering their unbiassed sentiments, would vote for any limitation of hours; being afraid of a reduction of wages." Sarah Siddons, Leicester, aged 48, says,

“I am afraid if we work less hours we shall get less wages.” Elizabeth Freckleton, Nottingham, aged 30, says, that “they [the hands] could not see that the time did them any harm, and they were sure that the money did them a deal of good.” Sarah Baily, aged 14, says, “I should *like* to work only ten hours. If my wages were to drop, I’d rather stay as I am.” Susan Bailey says, “I should not like to be tied down to work ten hours, to get less wages.” Elizabeth Hall, Leeds, aged 21, says, “I should be for stopping too [at ten hours]. They must not put down our wages though. It’s little enough now.” Mary Bates says, “I would rather work less time *for the same wages*.”

There is much improvement, no doubt, still to be made in the factory system; but not so much as has been already accomplished. It began with many things deserving reprobation; they have all been gradually disappearing; employers generally are now perceiving what some long ago did, that the well-being of their operatives is really of importance to their own interest; and in most respects, in many factories, the hands employed receive the benefit of an intelligent and watchful care from their employers. It is therefore but a blind humanity that leads the best of the meddlers to a mischievous interference.

Mr. Duncombe, who may be taken as good authority in such a case, in his place in the House of Commons on Monday night last, though one of the anti-factory party, declared that the operatives asked for a reduction of time, because they expected unreduced wages therefrom, which was, in fact, tantamount to admitting

that the operatives thought Parliament could fix their wages and lessen their toil.

Now let us suppose that Parliament, in a crazy fit, passed a law requiring master-tailors and master-bootmakers to give their operatives "twenty per cent. more wages than they now pay;" would the law be observed? could it be enforced? And if it could be enforced, would anything but mischief arise; mischief to the operatives, the masters, and the community? Or suppose, instead of this, that Parliament passed a law requiring master-tailors and bootmakers to pay their operatives "their present wages for making four-fifths of a coat, or four-fifths of a pair of boots;" or that the masters should pay "for four hours' work what they now pay for five." Take any other trades, about which we have some knowledge, and the absurdity of the supposition that Parliament could regulate the wages or the amount of toil in them, and the utter mischievousness of the attempt to do so, are glaring. But how do a shoe factory, a tailor's shop, a chair factory, a baker's shop, a type foundry, a hat factory, a spinning factory, a cabinet shop, differ from each other in the relationship of employer and employed? There is nothing peculiar in cotton-factory labour to distinguish it from tailor-shop labour, or any other labour, so far as the laws which determine wages are concerned.

Men invest their capital in manufactures with the view of reaping profit, and others labour that they may acquire the means of supplying their wants. If those who now labour could supply their wants without toil,

they would decline the toil altogether ; if they could supply their wants with half their usual toil, only half of that toil would be submitted to. They who toil, do so, not voluntarily, not as a mere amusement, but from the necessity of thus supplying their wants. And I hazard little in saying that there is no rate of profit however extravagant, nor no amount of wages however great, that the manufacturer and the labourer employed by him, would not realize if they could. On the other hand, the manufacturer, rather than let his capital lie idle, will employ it actively at any rate of profit, however small ; while the labourer, rather than starve, will toil for any rate of wages that will enable him to support life.

But the rates of profit and of wages are not fixed by the desires of those concerned ; otherwise we should not find enormous amounts of British capital seeking investments of every description abroad, in every part of the commercial world ; nor would we have been so familiar, as we are in this country, with unsuccessful strikes and combinations to raise wages.

Profits and wages necessarily depend, in a great part, upon influences co-extensive with the whole commercial world. A raw material is brought from one quarter of the world, manufactured, and then sent to another. Exchanges of the productions of the world in every imaginable state, and in almost an inextricable complexity of commercial arrangements, are constantly being made, to supply the countless demands of various communities. Now, all these communities coming into commercial communication, necessarily

influence the profits of each other, and consequently wages, which depend upon profits; out of which they are paid, and according to the rise or fall of which they must rise or fall, as has been most clearly shown in Colonel Torrens's admirable letter to Lord Ashley.

But the present mighty and complex business arrangements of the commercial world have been for ages growing to their present state; and, while they have carried forward civilization, they have more and more rendered one country dependent upon another. Especially with leading countries of the commercial world, things are so interwoven with each other in trade, that it is no longer possible to consider any great business question with reference to one of them alone.

Attempt in any one country by direct enactment of the Legislature to raise wages, to shorten the duration of labour, or to fetter the operative in the free disposal of his labour, and how is it possible that business shall not be greatly deranged in that country and the operative consequently injured? If the British Parliament had sovereign power over the whole commercial world, it could do nothing but mischief by fettering or meddling with labour. But, as its mandates will not be obeyed by other nations in the great commercial circle, any such attempt is next to madness.

It is wholly beyond the power of the Legislature, by direct enactment to that effect, to lessen the amount of toil to which the labouring classes are subject. Parliament may pass such laws with all the pomp and solemnity they choose, but they will be mere words, utterly impotent for their purpose. If labour be

lessened in factories, it is nothing but a disturbance of arrangement; for the wants of the labourers remain precisely as before; and these wants will inevitably drive them into other employments to make up their deficiency of wages. They will not toil the less, but the more; because they will go into other employments for which they are less skilled, and which generally give less remuneration than factory work. Besides, they will thus increase the labour competition in other trades, and render a lengthened time of work necessary to gain the same amount of wages on the part of those whose occupations they invade.

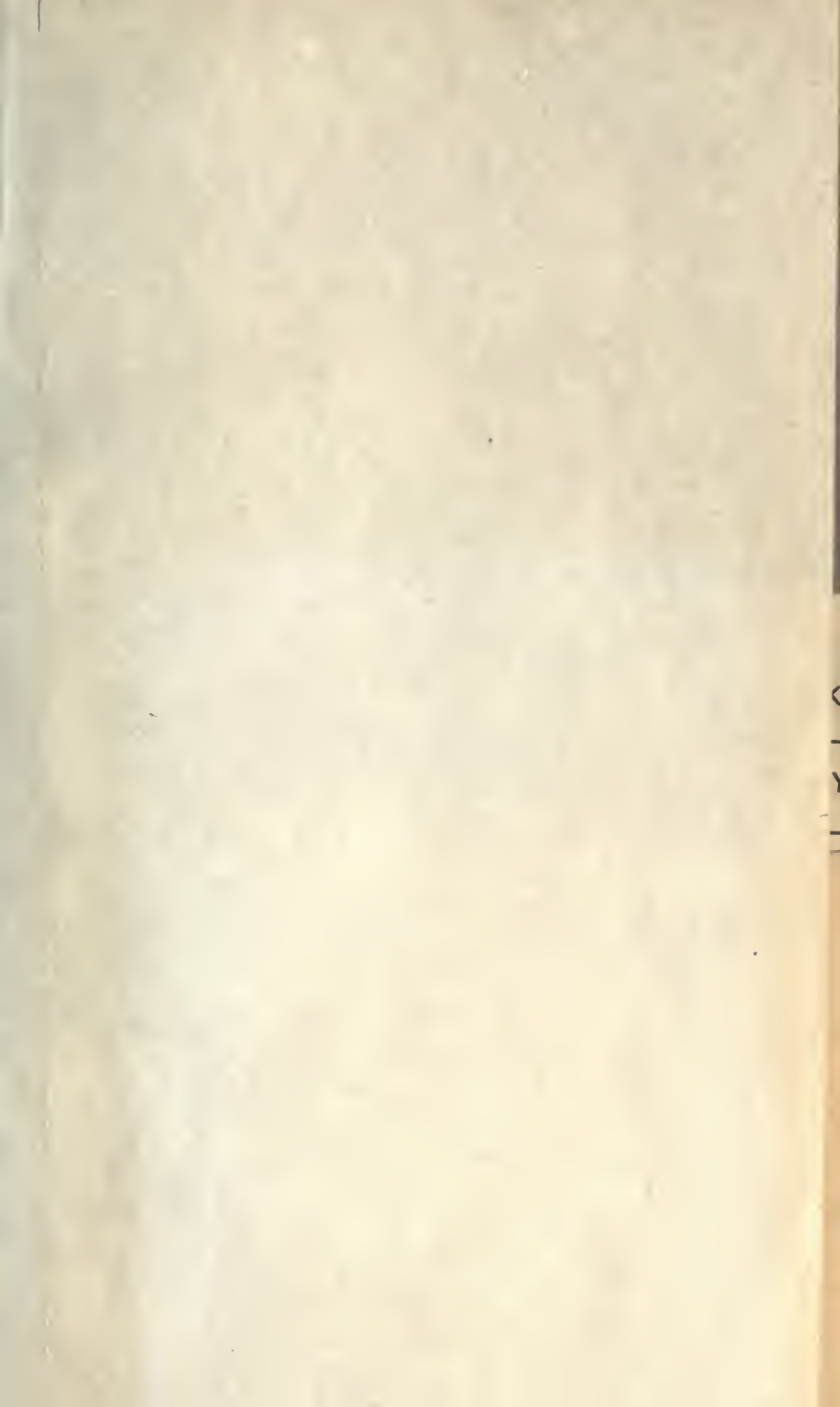
Another great mischief which this blind sort of legislation produces, is the fatal delusion which it fosters in the minds of the working classes that wages rise and fall at the option of the employers; that their interests are antagonistic; and that they may beneficially invoke the interference of Parliament between their employers and themselves;—Parliament being ultimately responsible to them, according to Mr. T. Attwood's doctrine, propounded so often at Birmingham. Thus, in fact, sowing the seeds of an anarchical revolution, at a time when every sober-minded man should do all in his power to enlighten and pacify the masses.

The assumption that Parliament has already decided in favour of interference with adult labour, when, in fact, removing naked women from mines was considered as purely a case of public decency, is an assumption which may well rank with the evidence of Mr. Sadler's committee of 1832. Should Par-

liament act upon this assumption, and pass a law fettering adult labour, as in the clauses of the Government bill prohibiting grown women from working in factories more than twelve hours, or at night, how can it give a refusal to Lord Ashley and Mr. Buller, when they demand next year that the same protection, as it is called, shall be extended to other employments, and to domestic servants?

It is really melancholy to witness the fatal tendency of the Legislature with regard to manufacturing labour; professions of the deepest interest for the operatives, heralding on the wildest recklessness as to their real welfare; and that recklessness baring its front, and priding itself upon being, indeed, outright recklessness.

Nothing but better education, and a greater demand for labour, can possibly benefit the working classes. Better education will keep the minimum of wages, at least, from sinking; it will enable them to lay out their wages to the best advantage, while it will render them more temperate, healthy, moral, and happy. Greater demand for labour, and not the tinkering of the Legislature, will raise their wages. And if the advice of one, who has spent the greater part of his life amongst the working classes, trying to improve and benefit them, could be listened to, I would implore the Legislature to devise speedily the best possible means for the education of the people, and to allow wages to rise and toil to lessen, by removing every shackle from commerce,—that commerce which has made this little island the greatest country the world has ever known, and which as yet sustains it in its proud position.





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Observations on the
factory system

