

## **Death and disease behind the counter / by Thomas Sutherst.**

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DEATH

AND

DISEASE

*BEHIND THE COUNTER*

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DEATH AND DISEASE  
BEHIND THE COUNTER.

THE HISTORY OF THE

ROYAL SOCIETY OF LONDON

FROM THE YEAR 1660 TO 1700

BY JOHN VAN DER HAEGHE

PH.D. OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

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# DEATH AND DISEASE

## BEHIND THE COUNTER.

The Parker Museum

PRESENTED BY

BY

THOMAS SUTHERST,

BARRISTER-AT-LAW

PRESIDENT OF THE SHOP HOURS LABOUR LEAGUE.

“Work, work, work, till the brain begins to swim,  
Work, work, work, till the eyes are heavy and dim!”

“Oh, men with sisters dear!  
Oh, men with mothers and wives!  
It is not linen you're wearing out,  
But human creatures' lives!”

Hood.

LONDON

KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH & CO., 1 PATERNOSTER SQUARE

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## P R E F A C E.

ABOUT two years ago, at the request of Mr Morley Alderson, the Secretary of a Shop Assistants' Association, I presided at a meeting held in Hyde Park, for the purpose of protesting against the unnatural conditions of shop labour. As a result, and in consequence of subsequent investigations, I took part in establishing the Shop Hours Labour League, of which eventually I consented to become President. Since that time a vigorous agitation has resulted in upwards of 150,000 retail traders and assistants publicly condemning overwork in shops, and requesting State interference. I believe the majority of those concerned throughout the country would, if similarly appealed to, come to the same determination.

Soon after assuming the office of President, I felt the need of a detailed statement of the cause I had espoused, and therefore resolved to prepare the following narrative of facts for the information of the public generally. The title may, to some, seem extreme. I wish sincerely it had been so. Unfortunately no other designation will adequately convey the startling results of shop labour. As the evidence is unfolded, death, disease, or infirmity, blighting young and useful lives, will be found on almost every page. It will be seen that the bodily powers of a large and intelligent class are being shamefully overtaxed, that the fundamental laws of health are flagrantly violated, and that the natural development of the young of both sexes is arrested by a cruel system whose ramifications extend to almost every populous centre in the United Kingdom. The misery and suffering, together with the physical, mental, and moral deterioration involved, constitute an evil of the worst kind, and one which should concern every person who pretends to a regard for the public welfare.

This is no mere sentimental grievance, but a substantial injustice, which is alike preventible, impolitic, and unnecessary. My aim is to expose and uproot it by enlisting the sympathy of the public, so that the same beneficent protection which has been thrown around other toilers may be extended to



those whose lives are spent in shops and warehouses. Thousands upon thousands of girls and boys—of young men and young women—in London, Liverpool, Leeds, Birmingham, Bristol, Manchester, Nottingham, and other industrial centres, are wasting away, the victims of overwork, from which they cannot possibly escape without the aid of the State. I have formulated a Bill which will, if enacted, afford considerable relief. Sir John Lubbock, whose public services are well known, has been good enough to take charge of it. In his hands its success is pretty well assured, for there is no reason why a question of this kind should either assume a party character or excite the opposition of anyone. The movement is purely humanitarian, and without doubt something must speedily be done to check the enormous sacrifice of life and health which daily blasts so many youthful hopes. Those who are unable to extricate themselves from the iron grasp of a relentless system solicit through me the aid of the public in asserting their natural rights. They have many sympathisers, but the number will, I trust, be considerably increased after the following statement has been perused.

I cannot, as President of the Shop Hours Labour League, proceed without first acknowledging the valuable aid rendered to the cause by His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury, His Eminence Cardinal Manning, Lord Brabazon, Lord Claud Hamilton, Lord Randolph Churchill, and the other patrons and patronesses of the League, together with a vast body of generous traders. I cherish the hope that other Christians, Humanitarians, and Philanthropists will follow their good example and hasten to the rescue.

I must also add that I have derived considerable assistance from a perusal of Professor Jevons' valuable Treatise on "The State in Relation to Labour," from which I have quoted rather extensively.

The League is also deeply indebted to the Council of the Royal Albert Hall for placing that magnificent structure at their disposal for the purpose of holding two National Demonstrations against long hours behind the counter, thereby promoting the interests of justice and humanity.

THOMAS SUTHERST.



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# *Death and Disease*

## *Behind the Counter.*

“ Even in the best state which society has yet reached, it is lamentable to think how great a proportion of all the efforts and talents in the world are spent in neutralizing one another. It is the proper end of Government to reduce this wretched waste to the smallest possible amount by taking such measures as shall cause the energies now spent by mankind in injuring one another, or in protecting themselves against injury, to be turned to the legitimate employment of the human faculties, that of compelling the products of nature to be more and more subservient to physical and moral good.”—JOHN STUART MILL on the Functions of Government.

“ Rely on it that intense labour, beginning too early in life, continued too long every day, stunting the growth of the body, stunting the growth of the mind, leaving no time for healthful exercise, leaving no time for intellectual culture, must impair all those high qualities which have made our country great. Your overworked boys will become a feeble and ignoble race of men, the parents of a more feeble and more ignoble progeny; nor will it be long before the deterioration of the labourer will injuriously affect those very interests to which his physical and moral energies have been sacrificed.”—LORD MACAULAY.

### INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

By reason of an unusual combination of circumstances the conditions surrounding the labour of the majority of the shop-keeping community have, as it seems to me, been hitherto regarded with a selfish indifference by the public at large. Purchasers have satisfied their wants as convenience dictated, quite regardless of the interests of those employed in the extensive process of distribution. In this there would seem to be nothing wrong or out of the ordinary course, seeing that the interests of buyer and seller are mutual, and that they must be brought together to effect an interchange of commodities. The process, however, involves the labour of



children, young men and women, and adults, who are the active agents of distribution. Several causes which are dealt with hereafter have resulted in the time occupied in the majority of the transactions between buyers and sellers being unduly and unnecessarily prolonged. No appreciable advantage seems to accrue from this to any of the parties concerned, but, on the contrary, the majority of distributors are physically, mentally, and morally deteriorated. At this moment vast numbers of assistants of both sexes are being robbed of health, robust constitutions are being broken down, disease and infirmities of all kinds are being sown broadcast behind the counter, and death is daily carrying off the victims of long hours and overwork. This it is to which I am anxious to direct the attention of the public in general and the House of Commons in particular for the purpose of reducing the hours of shop labour within reasonable limits, and protecting the health and general interests of all concerned. Fortunately in the majority of instances the interests of retail traders and their assistants are, so far as regards curtailing the hours of labour, identical, and my aim is not to create dissension but to unite them for their mutual protection against a pernicious system, and for the general promotion of the principles of health, justice, and humanity.

Questions relating to the health of those who labour in different departments of industry have, from time to time, been forced upon the attention of the public, not because outsiders have been directly affected, but for the reason that it is of vital importance to the commonwealth that the physical vigour of every class should be fully maintained. The several classes where labour grievances have been redressed succeeded in obtaining public attention and support by publishing to the world the nature and grounds of their complaints, and it is to be hoped that so long as improper inequalities and anomalies exist, some one will always be found willing to trumpet them forth to mankind. The distributing classes now, in turn, seek a share of the attention of the public, and it is my privilege to endeavour to unfold a substantial grievance from which they have long and patiently suffered. The respectability, intelligence, and social weight of the shopkeeping community entitle them to the ear and sympathy of the public in the ventilation of their grievances and the assertion of their rights. The assistants have exhibited the greatest forbearance under



the most trying circumstances, for, although suffering intensely from overwork, they have never resorted to intimidation, or unworthy means of any kind, in the vindication of their natural rights.

Notwithstanding the tendency there is to impress almost every public question with the stamp of one or other of the great political parties of the State, I trust that no one will be tempted to look at this question from a party point of view. Humanity should be above party. My single aim accordingly is to endeavour to conserve the health of those who are unable to protect it themselves, by, in the first place, appealing to those natural sentiments of humanity and justice which invariably come to the rescue of the oppressed when properly sought by deserving suppliants.

#### THE LONG HOURS.

I believe I am within the mark in stating that the majority of shop-assistants in this country work from seventy-five to ninety hours in every week. Of that majority one-fourth work the full ninety hours per week, two-fourths eighty hours per week, and the remaining fourth seventy-five hours per week. The minority excluded from this calculation is composed for the most part of those who are employed in large establishments in fashionable localities, where, as a rule, the hours are, without doubt, easy and reasonable. It would, therefore, so far as they are concerned, seem to be needless to interfere with shop labour, unless, of course, the assistants are kept behind the counter unreasonably long after the doors are closed. This I am given to understand is no uncommon thing even in certain large establishments, whose proprietors do not scruple to take credit for magnanimity by pretending to release their assistants at an earlier hour than other people. However this may be, I have to deal with the great majority who unquestionably stand and work from thirteen to seventeen hours a day. They go into the shop early in the morning, and there they remain until eight, nine, and ten o'clock on five days of the week, and until midnight and even later on a Saturday. The bodily exhaustion resulting from such protracted labour would be somewhat lessened if there was a fixed and sufficient cessation of toil allowed for meals, so that the assistants might at all events rely upon a temporary respite from the wasting fatigue of intermin-



able standing. Nominally there may be stated hours for meals in every establishment, but practically the time allowed is much too short, and the hours are varied to suit the ebb and flow of business in the shop. The assistant may be jaded, and ready to sink on the floor; the food may become cold and unpalatable, yet he must wait until the rush is over and the purchasers have been satisfied before the much needed rest and food can be had. Even then, if the assistants had a single hour all to themselves for rest and refreshment, as nearly all other employés have, it would be some compensation for having to wait; but when the dinner-table is reached, undue haste is invariably imposed, and the food must be hurriedly consumed in order either to make room for others, or to enable the assistant to resume his work behind the counter as speedily as possible. The result is that, on one day ten minutes is allowed for dinner, on another fifteen minutes, and the very longest time obtained—under circumstances which are unusually exceptional—to rest as well as to eat the most substantial meal of the day, is only half an hour. It is of course said by some traders that these inconveniences are inevitable, but I shall defer dealing with this and similar contentions until I reach a later stage of the narrative.

These protracted hours, with inadequate time for meals, even if spent in the open air amid all the freshness that surrounds the plough-boy as he tills the earth under the broad canopy of heaven, surrounded with rural beauty and health-giving breezes, would be regarded as excessive. What then must they be in small low-roofed shops with an atmosphere laden with minute particles, and charged to the full with heated and gaseous impurities? The best regulated and most spacious shops are not strikingly pleasant for any length of time. A ray of sunshine invariably reveals an otherwise almost imperceptible cloud of insidious dust which at every inspiration passes into the system only to clog the respiratory organs and interfere with their proper action. There are, of course, unpleasant circumstances in almost every calling by which men live, but those surrounding the shop-assistant are peculiarly treacherous, as their effect is not to maim or strike down the victim by a sharp, sudden blow, as in the case of artizans and mechanics who have to do with dangerous machinery or ponderous materials, yet the influences work stealthily, secretly, and almost imperceptibly, until in the majority of



instances the consequences attain such serious proportions as to be almost beyond the hope of any earthly remedy. Besides, the majority of workers incur the risks incident to their respective callings for nine or ten hours per day, which cannot be regarded as unreasonably long, but shop-assistants are exposed to the risks of their avocations for from fourteen to seventeen hours a day. Unquestionably all the dangers of life and work cannot very well be removed. I do not wish to make it appear that shopkeeping is an unpleasant occupation, but that which is healthy and agreeable for a reasonable time becomes irksome and injurious if continued for an undue period, and I have no hesitation in saying that if the hours of shop-assistants were curtailed, as much as they might be, their lot in life would be more enviable, so far as the pleasantness of the labour is concerned, than that of a great many workers. Even then, however, there would remain the confinement in a vitiated atmosphere. Stuffs, calicos, and silks cannot be continually torn, cut, or moved without throwing off clouds of minute particles, which necessarily impregnate the air of the whole shop. Purchasers of all grades in varying states of health come and go during the course of the long day, and the same air is breathed and re-inhaled over and over again by those who stand behind the counter. In the evening long rows of gas burners help to use up what little freshness there is left in the air, adding further impurity by diffusing heated nitrogen until the place throughout is charged with a combination of gases which both irritate the brain and poison the blood. There is no means of escape from such results.

#### THE LONG WEARY STANDING.

These consequences to a greater or smaller degree follow in almost every shop, but more particularly where the population, traffic, and business are compressed within a narrow compass. The most exhausting incident, however, of shop work is the long, long, standing. I do not contend that it would be either possible or convenient for assistants to sit and discharge their duties, nor should I wish to see them do so, because to stand and walk about a shop cannot of itself be considered as a very arduous occupation, provided there were regular times set apart and kept sacred for rest and refreshment, and that the hours of standing were not so many. The view in which standing is



regarded by shopkeepers themselves is plainly apparent from the solicitude they show for the comfort of their customers by providing seats for purchasers. It is undoubtedly more agreeable to sit and select what is required than to stand, but so far as there is an actual and pressing need of rest as between the assistants and the purchasers, it appears to me that the seats are at the wrong side of the counter. A little more solicitude in this direction for the young men and women behind the counter would, I am sure, not only be profitable to the employers, but would be appreciated substantially by considerate purchasers. The wasting fatigue resulting from standing scarcely needs any illustration, for almost everyone knows from experience that there are few more painful sensations than the feeling of complete exhaustion which prostrates the whole system after even a comparatively short period of standing. What then must be the state of those whose lot it is to stand for the lengthened periods already mentioned? We know that incessant walking for twenty-four hours was considered one of the most unbearable tortures to which witches in former times were subjected, for the purpose of compelling them to own their guilt, and that few of them could hold out for twelve hours. If this was regarded as a cruel torture at a period in the history of our country when we were less civilised, the advancement we have made has availed little to the shop-assistant, who in these days is obliged to submit to the intolerable fatigue of standing for periods, varying according to the locality, from thirteen to seventeen hours a day.

#### YOUNG AND IMMATURE CONSTITUTIONS.

The long hours, combined with the circumstances referred to, would play havoc with the health of even the strongest and most perfect specimens of humanity, but unfortunately all those harsh conditions are, for the most part, imposed upon young and immature constitutions. The shop-assistants of this country are chiefly minors. From one-half to two-thirds are composed of apprentice girls and boys, and young persons of both sexes, ranging from twelve to twenty-one years of age. The remaining third is made up of male and female adults. The adult third have, as a rule, passed through the preliminary period of training or apprenticeship, which is continually being



undergone by the two-thirds. The total number employed behind the counter in this country is necessarily very large, and although a rough estimate has been made I do not feel justified in giving any definite figures, but that the number is vast no one can doubt who reflects for one moment on the immense variety of retail establishments there are in every town with even a moderately large population. The largeness or smallness of the numbers, however, does not in any way interfere with the justice to which those who are aggrieved are entitled, as I hold it to be a sacred duty imposed upon all to enquire into the grievances of even the smallest number, with a view to doing as near as possible complete justice to all. But if numbers are to be weighed in the scale, I am abundantly fortified, for the oppression of long hours touches the majority of those who are occupied in the whole of the retail establishments in the United Kingdom, and their name is legion.

The bare recital of the conditions under which the majority of assistants, whether minors or adults, male or female, work, proves without the shadow of a doubt that they are subjected to unnatural restrictions from which they suffer physically, morally, and intellectually. The occupation is sedentary and exhausting, the air is impure, meal-times are inadequate and irregular, and the confinement is unduly protracted. Is it necessary to demonstrate the injurious results to the health of those concerned? Perfect health can only be maintained by strict obedience to certain well-defined natural laws, which should, in my opinion, be known and obeyed by everyone. In the case of shop-assistants, however, some of the most important of these laws are flagrantly violated; not by the will of those who are victims of the violation, but in defiance of their protestations and sufferings. We are taught that pure air, exercise, regular and sufficient periods wherein to nourish the body are indispensable to health, and that the body should not be unduly exhausted for want of proper rest and relaxation. Yet the class for whom I am pleading are absolutely deprived of the power to obey any single one of these elementary laws of health. The seasons come and go with their varied attractions, but the assistant beholds none of their passing beauties, nor derives any pleasure from the freshness of the fields or the genial breezes of spring and summer. The sun, it is true, throws his beams obliquely into the shop, but the brilliant rays merely reveal the monotony of the dusty surroundings,



and create a yearning for health-giving change and relaxation which can seldom be realised. What chance have assistants of getting a breath of fresh air when they do not finish their work until half-past eight, nine, ten, or eleven o'clock at night, and what inclination can they have after standing so long? The probability is they would rather rest their weary limbs than walk in search of fresh air. The work in itself is not very arduous, but if there was nothing else to do than simply to stand and talk to please purchasers, the strain thus imposed upon the body for so many hours would alone be sufficient to exhaust and prostrate the whole physical system.

#### TWO DAYS IN ONE.

The days are all long, but Saturday is, of course, the longest for the majority of shopkeepers, as it is usually midnight and in many instances one o'clock on a Sunday morning before the lights are extinguished and the assistants released. Thus one day out of every six is made to comprehend seventeen and eighteen hours continuous standing and working. In this manner is the prelude to the Sabbath spent, with the result that, in the morning, when other people are wending their way with light spirit and elastic step to a place of worship, the shop-assistant lies suffering in his bed from intense physical exhaustion resulting from the long hours of labour to which he has been subjected during the past week. In pondering on his condition as he rests his weary body, what is the picture of life presented to his mind—simply dreary drudgery, weariness, and fatigue, without the least colouring to relieve the monotony. The whole of Sunday is required to recruit his strength and prepare his jaded frame for the Monday which, I should say, comes too soon. The Sabbath is undoubtedly a day which ought to be devoted in part, at all events, to meditation, as well as the cultivation of a spirit of gratitude to the Creator for all the blessings of life; but unless shop-assistants have been well trained and taught to be thankful under all circumstances, one can scarcely be surprised if there should lurk in some hearts a feeling of discontent, and a want of faith and hope in a world which affords to them so few of the essentials to health and comfort. The outlook cannot be very pleasant under such circumstances, and a sense of oppression frequently pregnant with despair, naturally takes possession of



the mind as the assistant attempts to penetrate the mists surrounding his future career. Through sheer physical exhaustion and want of time the mental powers are utterly paralyzed and rendered useless, for the effect of these long hours, directly and indirectly upon the mind, are more disastrous than upon the body. The majority of assistants belong to respectable families, and have been well grounded in the elements of knowledge, but their powers and knowledge, as a rule, are completely extinguished when they enter retail establishments. They have no time to read even a newspaper unless on a Sunday, and mental culture is altogether out of the question after they leave work at such late hours. It is thus absolutely impossible for them to continue their education, as unquestionably they should do. The consequence is, in the majority of instances, they lose what knowledge they had, and the mind becomes almost a sterile blank.

These and indeed nearly all the statements I make may be proved either by reference to the evidence set out at the end of the book, or by personal investigation. As I proceed I shall give a few cases to emphasise the narrative, but the evidence proper will be found set out altogether hereafter. The following cases come in appropriately at this point:—

A manager in a large establishment says: "He is forty years of age; he has had twenty-six years' experience of shop life. He is afraid he will not be able to stand it much longer. Has been in Liverpool, Manchester, and Birmingham, but chiefly in London. Never worked less than eighty hours per week, but more frequently ninety hours per week. He now has charge of a great many male and female assistants, and has been all his life in establishments where the two sexes have been employed. The effects of the long hours and inadequate time for meals have been ruinous to his own health, and he feels at forty that his health is broken, and he is in fact an old young man. Directly business is over he is absolutely good for nothing, and on Sunday he feels only fit for bed most part of the day. He was no exception in this respect. There were very few old men in shops. The majority of persons of both sexes were, he should say, considerably under twenty-one years of age. Large numbers were below sixteen. All had to work the long hours, and all alike felt their effects, but of course the female assistants suffered more than the young men. It was quite a treat in some of the establishments he has been in to get to bed before 2 on a Sunday-morning, and now in his district long lines of shops were open and doing business at 12 on a Saturday night. During the week the hours were as a rule from



7.30 A.M. to 9.30 and 10 P.M. Out of eighty or ninety hours' toil, should say that not more than six hours were allowed for meals and absence from work during the six days. Twenty minutes is the average time allowed for meals, and then back to the shop. He often pitied the young folks as he walked up and down and saw their pale tired faces. He has gone through shop life in all its phases. He has seen hundreds break down, and they were breaking down every day before his eyes. No fresh air, no exercise, no sunshine, hurried meals, no time to read or do anything. What could be done after 10 o'clock at night? What can you expect? The young men, parched with the heated air and dust, and weary with standing, too often drown their fatigue and despondency with drink. The girls frequently think that anything in the world is preferable to the grinding toil of the shop. It is simply from bed to work and work to bed the year round. No one dare complain for fear of dismissal without a character. Combination is for the young folks, and indeed almost for adults, impossible. He noticed as a rule that young persons, male and female, are healthy and strong when they first come up from the country, but they invariably break down either before or at the end of their apprenticeship. He has known several instances where young men and women have been discharged for belonging to societies for enforcing their natural rights. There is, in his opinion, no remedy but an extension of the Factory Act. He has worked very hard in the early closing movement, and has often assisted in obtaining a weekly half-holiday; but after all the trouble of getting the masters to agree to close it has invariably broken down on account of the selfishness of a few men. If one opens they all open and so would he—no one can afford to fill his neighbour's shop in these days of keen competition. He might add that he knows a manager who has been informed by his doctor that he only has one lung left, and must relinquish the trade if he wishes to live. The doctor ascribes the long hours and physical inconvenience as the cause. He cannot take up with anything else or leave, because he is a married man, with a large family, yet reasonable hours and a weekly half-holiday might save him. At the shop where he works they are obliged to have gas in the day. The ceiling is so low that an ordinary man is able to touch it with his hands, yet there are fifteen young men employed in such a place filled as it must be with heated and impure air. During the last two years several young men have left that single establishment through ill-health, and two of them to his own knowledge have died. His wife's sister has been in the trade, and symptoms of consumption have been brought on through the long hours and standing; she is now in a convalescent home. If the hours were less the morality and physique of all assistants would be much higher. He considers the difficulties which surround trades' unions in general would be insuperable in the case of shop assistants. If all the shop assist-



ants turned out to-day on strike their places would be filled to-morrow. The majority are too young to undergo the same discipline as the artisans and mechanics, and too much within the absolute power of the employers. He has often noticed in one and the same house this strange anomaly. The factory inspector has gone upstairs to the milliner's workwomen, and enforced the Factory Acts, but the poor weary milliner's saleswoman below in the shop is taken no notice of because not protected by legislation. Yet the saleswomen worked harder and longer. He should say that fully three-fourths of the assistants, male and female, are below the age of twenty-one. As they get older they are sacrificed to make room for younger hands. Marriage under the present system of shop labour is discouraged. It is a very hard matter for assistants who are married to get situations."

William H., age 23, bootsalesman. I am now at Peckham. Hours are from 8 A.M. to 9.30 P.M. ; Saturdays, 12 P.M. I am on the premises until I close, and my meals are sent. I often feel as if I should like a run out to get a mouthful of fresh air. I am too tired to get up before mid-day on Sunday. We have two boys fourteen years of age, and the long hours and standing tell upon them as they did upon me. They can't stand them as well as a man, and no doubt their growth is stopped by it. The busiest part of the day is from 4 P.M. to 8 P.M. I have no holidays. If I had only twelve hours a day I should be able to do what I should like—attend lectures and other meetings. If I had a half-holiday, life would be worth living. I should feel that I was a true-born Briton. No one knows what tiring work it is but those who go through it. I hope the day is not far distant when the hours will be reduced. It's just this, if one tradesman closes another won't, so while they are at war with one another on that score, the poor assistants have to suffer.

Robert H., age 21. I have been in the drapery trade since I was fourteen years of age. My hours now are from 7 A.M. to 9 P.M. Saturdays, 11 P.M. As yet I have not been laid up, although I believe two or three more years more will shatter my health. I now have daily severe headaches, inflamed and sometimes blistered feet, and feel a heavy languor and dulness. On Saturdays especially every other feeling is merged in the desire to crawl up stairs. On Sunday morning I feel more inclined to rest than go to religious worship. I used to have a Sunday school class, but now I neither have the time nor the inclination for such things, as the long drudgery consumes all my energies. I scarcely ever see a paper to know how the world goes on, and I just manage to keep civilized. There are in this establishment twenty-five, all under twenty years of age. I have seen many young girls and boys come from the country with the bloom of health on their cheeks, but the atmos-



phere of the shop has soon accomplished a bleaching process. Of course the employers don't like the young persons to die under their care, so they send them away or back to the country as soon as they begin to suffer and are unable to work. I have given our nominal time of closing, but like thousands more we are more often than not kept in the shop thirty or forty minutes after the shutters are up to clear away. This decidedly could be avoided. Our porters are instructed to put up every shutter before closing the door. The result is that many persons come straggling in just as the shutters are going up. Then there are a dozen events in the year which afford pretexts for keeping open an hour later. Something ought to be done to allow us to eat our meals in peace, as under present arrangements we are liable to be disturbed two or three times during one meal, as it seems to be of infinitely more importance that customers should be served than that we should have a few minutes to eat our food.

Walter R. K., age 20, draper's assistant. I have been at Woking and in Commercial Road, E. At Woking my hours were from 7.30 A.M. to 8.30 P.M.; in summer, till 9 P.M.; Saturdays, 10.30 and 11 P.M. In London, 7.30 A.M. to 9.30 P.M.; Saturdays, 11 P.M. Meals, fifteen to twenty minutes allowed. I have not been laid up ever, but for the last year or two I have felt a fatigue which I cannot somehow shake off. I feel as if I should drop before closing time through the long standing and heat and flare of the gas. I am much too tired at the end of each day to think of mental improvement or anything else but bed. There are thirty in this establishment, half under twenty, and half over twenty years of age. The long hours have affected many whom I know, causing a continuance of bad health, and in several cases consumption has set in.

Charles H. T., age 20, draper at King's Cross. Been in business since sixteen. Hours are now from 7 A.M. to 9.30 P.M.; Saturdays, 10.30 P.M. I was at Falmouth four years, and the hours there were reasonable, and so were meal times. Here, however, I have no specified time. The food is simply "bolted" as quickly as possible. I am frequently called forward from my meals. There are twenty females, and twenty males here. We all live on the premises. About half under twenty years of age. There are busy and slack periods during the day and I am quite sure that the business now spread over so many hours could be done in half the time. Earlier closing would benefit employers as much almost as assistants. We don't complain without a real cause.

Herbert G., age 20, grocer, Whitechapel. Been in business seven years. During the whole time I have worked from 7 and 7.30 A.M. to 10 P.M., and on Saturdays, midnight and after. Meal



times, twenty minutes each. I was strong and well at first, but many a time now I feel fit to sink down. I feel very tired and weary every night, but more so on Saturdays. I should like to attend lectures and join the Volunteers, but I cannot do it for want of time. There are six males and one female here ; four of us under twenty years of age. I have no holidays. I have known many young men go away in bad health since I came to business. In my first situation, when I was about fifteen, I asked my employer to grant me time to attend a Bible class, once a fortnight, between 8 and 9 P.M., and he refused me in a very rough manner. Sometime after I asked him if he would let me have an evening once a month, he refused that. Feeling my need of learning, I found a friend who offered to teach me from 10 to 11 P.M., but on asking my employer to let me stay till 11 P.M., he refused, saying that he would not keep supper for me till that time of night. In my humble opinion the majority of young men are obliged to put up with it because they come up from the country, and have no friends in London, and because their wages are so very low that they cannot save anything ; and being employed monthly, they have to give a month's notice, and therefore cannot find a place beforehand, so having no money and no home, or very poor friends, they cannot afford to leave.

William H., age 22, grocer's assistant at Lavender Hill. Have been in three places since I was fifteen years of age. My hours have been, and are, from 7.30 A.M. to 9.30 P.M. ; Fridays, 10 P.M. ; Saturdays, 12 P.M. (Corroborates others as to meals.) At the end of the day my feet burn and my limbs ache. On Saturday it is something cruel. There are five of us on the premises—three under twenty years of age. We have no holidays. I have known one death through the long hours, and many a one I have known broken down and be obliged to leave. It's very hard to have one's health ruined at the very beginning of life, and then having to go through the world with half a constitution.

Harry E., age 21, grocer's assistant. Have had three situations in London. The first was at Covent Garden ; second at Pimlico ; third, the one I am now in. At the first we opened 7.30 till 8.30, and 11.30 Saturday ; at the second, 7.30 till 9.30 in the winter, and not till 10 p.m. during the summer months. In this it is from 8 till 9 ; 11.30 Saturday. At each place they do not close till 10 p.m. on Fridays. In the first two no time was allowed for meals ; we went in, ate our food, then back again to work, and not allowed to sit a moment after we had done, whether we had been ten or twenty minutes. In the third, half-an-hour for each meal. On the whole I have had fair health, but am not nearly so strong and robust as those I know who have had shorter hours. Am certainly not in such a good state of health. Have often felt ready



to drop from long standing and confinement in a hot and vitiated atmosphere. On Saturday nights feel thoroughly tired and jaded, with no life or spirit left, and on Sunday mornings I sometimes feel but little better, consequently the mind cannot be calm and tranquil. Scarcely remember attending a lecture in London, and do not always feel fit to study after 10 P.M. I live on the premises. There are here three male, one female ; one under twenty, three over. Never have had half-holiday. The effects of long standing seems to produce in others as in myself a languor and continued weariness. Have known two assistants who had to leave situations. I have been ill and had to go home through illness, and could name five others besides myself who are suffering with weakness and acute dyspepsia at the present time. Evening is the busiest part of the day. I decidedly think we could do equally as much trade in much less time ; twelve hours would be amply sufficient. The money grubbing propensity of the shopkeeper, which panders to the thoughtlessness of a pitiless public causes the long hours. The want of unanimity amongst the traders, and the obstinacy of one or two is the ruin of the half-holiday. I should be able to attend lectures if the hours were twelve a day. The Thursday evening holiday fell through here because one man would not agree. He was afraid it would do him an injury, and so we have to stay behind the counter when we might be away, and am afraid it will always be so.

James H., age 28, oil, colour, and Italian warehouseman, Jamaica Road, Bermondsey, S.E. Cause of long hours—custom, want of unity among traders, avarice and greed of some, indifference of many, mutual distrust and rivalry, fierce competition, no law to coerce or govern, the whole influenced, backed up, governed, and in a large manner controlled by the apathy and indifference of the public or a large section thereof, the improvident who shop anyhow and anywhere being both ignorant and regardless of the evil entailed by long hours. Trade could certainly be properly carried on without such long hours. My experience teaches me that a fair working day of from eleven to twelve hours per diem both should and would, under any but very exceptional cases, be amply sufficient. I might say that I am in many senses miserable through what in a true sense may be called a horrible system. My general health impaired, my moral and intellectual abilities dwarfed and stunted, and my life at times almost a burden, suffering from varicose veins in the legs, caused by standing, twisting, turning, stooping, bending, &c., in very often a close heated shop, or perhaps in winter the very reverse, five days a week, fifteen hours at a stretch, and on Saturday seventeen hours. The remedies are—Want of something stronger than “moral suasion ;” The voluntary system is impracticable, especially in the trade I represent. My assistants constantly complain and suffer, in fact I cannot for any length of time keep a shop boy,



their parents saying the hours are too long and injurious to health. Certainly nothing will be done by persuasion, and after all the varied attempts during the last twenty-five years, I cannot imagine how any really sensible and observant man could hope by these means to effect a change. Depend upon it nothing short of an Act of Parliament dealing individually with traders by license to trade during certain hours will remedy the evil, and I earnestly trust such an Act will soon indeed become law. I must confess I have spoken as I feel, but certainly, according to my real knowledge of facts, and from my heart, condemn and detest this horrible system of late trading. Even you, sir, can hardly estimate the real and very terrible position in which, owing to no law to govern, many young people suffer. I can tell you that though an employer, yet my position is very unpleasant, and I simply state it to show that both employers and employes alike suffer. I can never sit down to a meal without being called up for some trifling purchase, and I can assure you that many assistants are often alone, and the wants of nature oft have to be disregarded; and I could tell you cases where young men have when left entirely alone in a small business had to suffer terribly for want of natural relief, have had to take every meal behind the counter, and when in ill health have had to toil on fifteen to sixteen hours a day making the best of it, "working it off," when by every law human or divine, they should have been in bed, carefully tended and nursed, and the result is what?—a premature grave, and to that I feel, unless some good fortune, viz., change of life, befall me, I too shall soon sink, and my experiences are but those of thousands. I doubt not but there are many worse, and I assert that the experience under which thousands and tens of thousands of human beings, both employers and employed, are now existing, is in truth a disgrace to the so-called civilization of this 19th century of Christian England.

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#### ALL WORK AND NO PLAY.

It is quite true that the people of this country are exceptionally favoured so far as regards educational and civilising agencies. They have free libraries, mechanics' institutes, museums, magnificent parks, and beautiful picture galleries, the advantages and pleasures of all of which are available to the bulk of the inhabitants. But these national boons are mere mockeries so far as shop-assistants are concerned, because it is quite beyond their power, under existing circumstances, for them to find time either to visit the parks, to attend educational or scientific classes, or to make life agreeable by social intercourse and well-spent leisure. The young men and women in nearly



every other department of life have at least their evenings to themselves, and may be found during the summer months in the cricket field, on the river, riding a bicycle, or taking exercise of some kind or other, but all these and similar agencies devised for the benefit of the human race might as well be in the moon so far as the assistants are concerned, because they are absolutely shut out from them by reason of the long hours of labour. A brisk walk, an hour or two in the open air, or a period of athletic exercise taken daily, would brace up the whole system, purify the blood, and add a gleam of sunshine to lives that are now clouded in darkness. To be able to do these things is a natural right which no supposed necessity or system should be allowed to interfere with. Men and women should not be dealt with as if they were inanimate pieces of machinery without feeling or sensibility. God has ordained by his laws which speak through the operations of nature, that man shall set apart so much time for labour, for exercise, for nourishing the body, for mental culture, and for relaxation. And if the due proportions are neglected, loss of health, physical infirmity, ignorance, disease, and unhappiness are the results. The history of the human race has proved this over and over again, but unfortunately it is not necessary to peruse the records of history to illustrate the operation of these fixed and infallible laws. Thousands upon thousands of broken-down constitutions and early graves testify to-day that God's natural laws are being violated in every place where assistants are caged up and confined for so many hours daily. The effect is indeed alarming, and the system which tolerates it a disgrace to our vaunted civilization and humanity.

#### THE MISTAKES OF PARENTS.

The pernicious system begins its work on the girls and boys who are apprenticed or taken as assistants at the early age of twelve, thirteen, and fourteen. They leave school and home and a condition of life in which they have had abundance of exercise and fresh air with regularity of meals. Their spirits are high with hope, and they are full of youthful health and vigour. The future is painted with gorgeous colours in anticipation of the success that may be achieved in the calling they are about to adopt. But their young hopes are soon destined to be blighted. Little do they or their parents reflect upon the



kind of life that awaits them. The parent or guardian who sends a boy to be a mechanic or artizan has a tolerable guarantee that he will be independent, and not condemned to sacrifice the whole of his time and health to the calling he has chosen ; but the youth who enters a shop is consigned to long hours, almost certain ill-health, and probably a premature grave. He bids adieu to exercise, fresh air, friends, books, and all that makes life worth having, with no hope of relief unless he becomes his own master, and by that time probably his health will be broken down by previous endurance. Unless a young man either has or is likely to have capital to enable him to start in business for himself, the career of a shop-assistant is a most perilous one to embark upon. True, it is respectable, but it is a mistaken notion for parents to suppose that their children can do better or are more genteel by going behind a counter than they would be if they acquired a knowledge of some handicraft in which there is not so much competition, and to which they could turn their hands at any time in almost any part of the world. This hankering after a superficial gentility should be checked by all parents and guardians who wish to promote the true interests of their children. The markets are glutted with clerks and assistants out of work, the majority of whom, with their respectability and intelligence, might have prospered and been happy as mechanics or artizans, and probably manufacturers. The vicious system I am endeavouring to expose crushes and extinguishes all the energies, both mental and physical, at the most critical period of life, when the body and mind should be concurrently developed by a proper amount of physical exercise and mental culture. Boys, girls, and young persons who have such harsh conditions imposed upon them should be peculiarly the objects of our solicitude. Their vital energies are consumed, the blood becomes impregnated with impurity, and such a strain is put upon their young and immature systems that their sensibilities are deadened, their powers are warped, and their natural development completely arrested.

#### THE EFFECT ON GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN.

The consequences of shop labour are sufficiently ruinous to the constitutions of the male sex, but its effects on the health of girls and young women are cruel to an extreme.



Men are expected to be able more or less to endure occasionally excessive toil and fatigue; their frame and constitution fit them for it, but woman was never intended to stand side by side with man in trials of physical endurance. I would not for one moment exclude women from these employments, because in many instances they are able to perform the duties devolving upon them even better than men; but I wish to see the conditions of their labour such as they can bear without injury to themselves and with benefit to the community. If the hours were reduced within reasonable limits, the young women would be better able than they are now to compete with men, as thousands under existing circumstances are obliged from utter prostration, after a short trial, to abandon the counter, thus making room for men who, although physically weakened by the system, are yet able to bear it better than women. As matters now stand we have a harsh and cruel system forced upon young and old indiscriminately without any regard to their age, sex, or physical capacity. The females being weaker, and less capable of standing the long hours, are naturally affected first. Then the male apprentices are touched, and finally the adults break down, but all suffer more or less acutely according to their sex, age, or strength. If, however, the hours were curtailed so as to admit of sufficient time being given for meals, rest, and relaxation, both sexes would be able to discharge their duties cheerfully, and without more injury than they would be subjected to in other callings, because the conditions would be reasonable and the competition almost equal.

All the comments I have made upon the injuries resulting from this system apply with double force to females. An attempt was made some time ago by a combination of benevolent ladies to obtain seats for the female assistants, but the project fell through on account, I am told, of the impracticability of the scheme. There would, however, be no need for seats behind the counter if a reasonable period of perfect rest were allowed in the middle of the day, and if there was a complete cessation of labour after, on an average, say nine or ten hours labour per day. It is the wasting unbearable standing, the inadequate time for meals, and the vitiated atmosphere that do the mischief, causing a sense of dulness and monotony, without the gleam of a hope of relief before a very late hour. Is it surprising they are unfit to do anything



except go to bed exhausted in body and depressed in mind, when their only prospect is to be subjected on the morrow to the same wearying, pitiless round. The majority of female assistants have, I take it, been well and carefully trained under the supervision of respectable parents, and large numbers of both sexes rush to towns, fresh from the country, with sound constitutions, and full of health and vigour, but the long standing and the vitiated air soon do their fatal work. The rosy cheeks and round full face speedily become pale and emaciated. The features sharpen, and the complexion assumes a yellow, unhealthy tinge. The eyes part with their lustre and shew the ominous sinking and darkness. The expression loses its sparkling vivacity and becomes stolid and sad. The legs swell, the back aches, and innumerable internal complaints supervene. Dyspepsia shews itself, the mind and nerves become shaken. The bronchial tubes become clogged, and the blood is speedily poisoned from the continual breathing of air charged with dust and impurity. A slight cough follows, which in numberless cases produces consumption, and in fact the whole system—mind and body—begins to wither and decay, evolving different forms of infirmity and disease, until the poor victim of this vicious system either drops into a premature grave or passes the remainder of life in bodily suffering—a burden to herself, and—as compared with her former state—a wreck of humanity. This is no high colouring. Thousands of girls and young women (and men too) may be found in London, Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, and other large towns, ready to prove, by their own sufferings and impaired constitutions, that what I state is rather within than beyond the mark.

If the world could be perfectly regulated there would probably be no need for women to enter the strife of life in competition with man; but we live on a planet full of seemingly irreconcilable inconsistencies. The weak have either to do the work of the strong, or the strong and weak have their strength consumed by immoderate labour, or neither the one nor the other are able to find work and food, though ever so willing to do their part, and all this in the midst of abundance. Many, of course, are to blame for the inconvenience they suffer. The inconsistency, however, of this question involves a flagrant injustice to a class of persons who, under existing circumstances, are absolutely powerless to protect



themselves. The many unnatural conditions surrounding the superficial age in which we live have probably a great deal to do with the displacement and distribution of both male and female labour. Yet, however this may be, it does seem very unfair on those whom misfortune, poverty, or uncontrollable circumstances have thrust out into the world to earn a living, that they should be obliged, instead of gracing a home, to work under conditions involving the sacrifice of all that makes life worth living. Circumstances place them on the horns of a fatal dilemma. They must either face want and starvation, or accept an unhealthy service in which mind and body deteriorate. Reformers are continually doing their best to reduce inequalities and remove inconsistencies. By their efforts at some remote period in the history of the world, the weaker sex may be required to discharge other and more agreeable duties than waste their womanhood and strength behind counters of any kind; but that day, I am afraid, is far distant. We cannot, therefore, hope to give immediate relief by removing that horn of the dilemma which involves inverting the order of things as at present constituted. But what we can do is to attack the other horn of the difficulty. However anxious to protect the health of women, we must recognise the necessity of female labour. That being so, it is the duty of all who pretend to have any regard for the public welfare to see that immediate steps are taken to surround it with healthy conditions, so that a woman may work in pleasure and live independently by her labour without thereby contracting disease and bodily suffering. This is what some of the female assistants say:—

Kate M., age 18, draper's assistant. I have been in business four years, at Deptford, Blackheath, and at Southwark Park Road. At the two former places we began at 8 A.M., and were supposed to close at 9 P.M., and on Saturdays at 11 P.M., but in reality it was half-an-hour or three-quarters after that before we got out of the shop, although the shutters were up. At Southwark Park Road we begin at 8.30 A.M., and do not leave until 10 P.M. On Fridays 10.30 P.M., and on Saturdays 12 and 12.30 P.M. No particular times are allowed for meals; when eating ceases, business must be immediately resumed. I was quite well when I went into business, but after being behind the counter six months, I began to feel the effects of the standing; have been constantly unwell since, and am now not at all well. The long standing causes the most painful feelings in the feet, legs, and back, and for the want of fresh



air and outdoor exercise, an almost constant headache. Towards the end of the day the whole body aches, and a wretched low spiritedness accompanies it. On a Sunday morning, feel as if a day's complete rest would be much more beneficial than going to church, where one is compelled to sit through the service with a splitting headache and weary heart. There are six females and two males, and we all live on the premises. Only two are over twenty. The ages of the others range from fourteen to eighteen. I have heard almost all my fellow-assistants complain of the pains I have described as feeling myself. I am suffering from weak action of the heart, and often have fainting fits, especially in mild weather, when the shop is stuffy and no air about. After being in the drapery for six months I lost my father, and soon after was ill myself, and was unable to go to business for some time. I was only too pleased when well to resume my work. My salary is very small, and out of it I have to pay away about a third for medicine, and to help to support my mother who is ailing. With what is left I have to clothe myself, so as to making any provision for the future it is out of the question. The doctors all say one thing, and that is the cause of my health being so poor is for want of more rest and fresh air. My case is only one of thousands much worse.

P. W., draper's assistant, age 23. I have been in Kingsland, Mile End, and Holloway. Went into business at 16. Average hours are from 8.30 A.M. to 9.30 and 10 P.M., and on Saturday 11.30 to 12 P.M. Time for meals about 20 minutes each. I was in good health when I went into business, but my health has failed me several times, and I have been so ill that I have had to leave two or three situations. I am now under the doctor. I believe that I should be very strong if I had not so many hours to stand; and the gas that is obliged to be used so much is very injurious, and, I believe, poisonous. I am so tired out on a Saturday that I throw myself on to the bed, almost unable to undress myself, as I feel in a fainting condition. I have often fainted after leaving business, and several times fallen down behind the counter from weakness and faintness. There are eighteen in this establishment—twelve females and six young men, seven over twenty and eleven under. I have an early closing on one day of the week; but we are the only people who close now in the neighbourhood, as the others have broken through the voluntary arrangement. We feel that we could not blame our employer if he were again to open, for why should those selfish tradesmen have his trade? I have known many young ladies sink under the long hours, and be obliged to go to their homes or friends at once, for we are supposed never to get weary or ill. I consider ten hours is quite long enough to stand behind the counter; but, of course, if we only had to work twelve, and had a half-holiday regularly, we should not have so much to complain of. I am very thankful that you are taking up our cause,



for we cannot do anything ourselves, as the lives of shop assistants are little short of slavery. We must always have a smile ready, however weary and ill we are. Our masters can go out in the day and come into business refreshed, and they expect us to feel as they do, never giving 'it a thought that they have had rest and we none. All I can do is to ask God to help you and all connected with this great work.

C. S., draper's assistant, age 20. Have been two years at Islington, ten months at Holloway, eight months in Oxford Street, twelve months in Shepherd's Bush. The hours in all these places are about the same, being from 8 and 8.30 A.M. to 9 and 9.30 P.M., and on Saturdays from 11 to 12 P.M. In Holloway we closed at 6 on a Saturday, but it was a large establishment, and quite exceptional. Twenty minutes only is allowed for each meal. I was very strong and healthy when I first entered business, but am now far from being so. I feel the long hours telling upon me every day more and more. It is not a very nice time, ten at night, to go for a walk, and Sunday is the only day I can get a walk. I should be satisfied with half-an-hour for meals. But now I feel thoroughly tired and done up every day, and as though I could take no pleasure in anything, and almost too tired to walk up stairs. I go to church on Sundays when I am not too tired, but when I do my head generally aches. Attending lectures and seeing our friends is out of the question. There are thirty-five of us on the premises—two females, twenty-five young men, and eight boys. We had a half-holiday at one place, but had to stay longer other nights for it. At the other places it was simply work, work, work, from one end of the week to the other. A young lady who lived with me in Islington had to leave with weakness of the spine through the excessive standing. I do not know how people can expect us to be pleasant and civil when they come in at 9 and 10 o'clock, when we are fit to drop.

E. I. P., book-keeper and cashier in a grocer's shop, age 17. This is my first situation. I begin work at 8.30 A.M. and work till 9.45 P.M., but on Fridays it is 10.15 P.M., and on Saturdays 11 P.M. before I leave. I was in excellent health when I first came, but now often suffer from headache and indigestion. Being cashier and book-keeper, I sit the most of the time, but feel tired and languid for want of fresh air and exercise. Mine is a continued mental strain, without change or rest. I live on the premises, and cannot attend any meetings or take a walk, as the hours are so late. There are five assistants here—one over twenty, and four under that age. We used to close at 5 on a Thursday, but it broke down because some traders would not close. My brother is an assistant, and has been laid up for some time, the doctor says through long hours and overwork. I should be thankful if I only had to work twelve hours a day, but even that is a long time for young girls to have to work.



Nellie G., age 20. I have worked at Buckingham Palace Road, I am now in Oxford Street. We commence work at 7.30 A.M. and go on until 9 P.M. on an average, but frequently from 7 A.M. to 11 P.M. It is always between 11 and 12 on Saturday before we get out of the shop. Our meal times are very irregular. We have them at various times, and never more than about twenty minutes for each meal. As I often have to wait for my meals I have no appetite, and frequently cannot eat, and generally I have indigestion. I was in good health when I went into business four years ago, but now I am weak and almost worn out. I do not live on the premises. There are here nine females, and eleven males, most of them under twenty years of age. I have no weekly holiday. All the assistants with whom I have come in contact have suffered more or less from the long hours and standing. I have during my short experience known three deaths through consumption brought on by the overwork and constant standing. I should be satisfied with twelve hours a-day and a weekly half-holiday.

Agnes B., age 17, draper's assistant. I have worked at Poplar and New Cross, the hours being from 8.30 A.M. to 9.30 P.M., and on Saturdays from 8.30 A.M. to 12 P.M. There are no specified times for meals. We have to eat as quick as possible, and then leave the table and go back to work. My health is far from good, although I was well when I went into business at fifteen years of age. My feet and legs ache terribly towards the end of the day. There are on the premises three females and two males, three under twenty and two above. We all live on the premises. I have no holidays. A young lady friend of mine died of consumption, through the long hours and standing.

Charlotte H., age 32, draper's assistant. Have had fourteen years' experience in medium class trade. I am now at Limehouse. The hours I have worked during my experience have been from 8 and 8.30 A.M. to 9.30 and 10 P.M., and 11 and 12 P.M. on Saturdays. The time allowed for meals according to my experience is about twenty minutes for dinner and fifteen minutes for other meals. I have suffered very much from long standing, but I am somewhat relieved where I am now, as we are allowed to sit occasionally when not serving customers. The long hours and perpetual standing in the majority of places I have been in certainly ruin many constitutions. During my time I have known several die of consumption, and hundreds break down under the pressure.

A forewoman, aged 28, says that she has been occupied in shops from thirteen years of age. Worked in Pimlico, Chelsea, and Whitechapel, and now in the city, where there are 200 assistants, chiefly girls. The hours worked have seldom been less than fourteen on five days of the week and sixteen on a Saturday. The physical suffering and inconvenience could only be told to a



doctor. Has known several deaths and many constitutions completely broken down through the long hours and standing. Frequently ill herself, and now undergoing medical treatment. Although comparatively young, feels that her constitution has been undermined. About two-thirds of the females employed in shops are below the age of nineteen or twenty, a very large number being under sixteen. Having had fifteen years' experience, can say that the object in employing so many very young girls is because their labour is so cheap. As soon as they get older and either want more money or their health begins to go, they are discharged, younger ones are moved up, and still younger ones are brought into the trade. Most of the girls seem to be healthy and strong when they first come, but a year or two in the shop takes the colour out of their cheeks. Been in shops where the assistants have been released at five o'clock once a week, but it only lasted a short time. The half-holiday has always broken down. Felt a great benefit from it. Assistants only have as a rule from fifty to sixty minutes allowed for three meals and rest all the day. Regular meal times and a few hours once a week would be a great blessing to all. Girls might endure the work very well if they had only to work eleven or twelve hours a day with an hour and a-half out of it for meals and rest, and, of course, a weekly half-holiday. The pain and suffering caused by the long standing cannot be understood but by those who have experienced it. Should never think of going into a shop if she had to begin again. Would rather be a servant in a good family; always going to the doctor herself, has paid two doctors' bills within nine months; knew a young friend, who died three weeks ago. She was only at the trade three years and a-half; she entered the trade at 14, and died at 17½. She was in perfect health when she came up from the country—in fact, every one said a lease of her life might have been taken, but the long hours, the standing, and the unhealthy surroundings killed her. The doctor said so. She was in an establishment at Chelsea, where the girls slept ten in a room. She used to say, "Life is such a drive. I couldn't understand at first why you complained, but I feel it now." Also knew of another female assistant who died recently—killed by the long hours in two years. Girls are often crowded into small, badly-ventilated sleeping rooms. No one would believe it but those who had experienced it. The girls are poor, and must either starve or face death and disease behind the counter. They are willing and eager to work to any reasonable extent, but the standing such long hours is beyond all reason.

A female shop-assistant states that she is 18 years of age. Went into business at 14, healthy and strong. Began work at eight every morning, and continued till half-past nine five days of week; on Saturday does not leave the shop until twelve o'clock. Has to



stand all the working-hours, and must either do or appear to be doing something all the time. Never has more than twenty minutes for dinner, and fifteen minutes for tea. Frequently called away during meal-times to serve in the shop. Results: Frequently under medical treatment; feels weak, tired, and exhausted every morning when the time comes to begin work, and many a time during the day felt ready to drop from fatigue. On Sunday, after working till midnight on Saturday, felt completely worn out and utterly unable to attend a place of worship. Seldom has an opportunity of taking walking exercise or getting a breath of fresh air. Known many fellow-assistants leave and be discharged because of ill-health caused by the long hours and standing. The girls in the shop are always complaining of ailments, and are very often under the doctor. The work is light, and is not objected to—it is the standing long hours without sufficient and regular time for meals and rest. Many a time stands and works in pain, but does not complain for fear of losing her situation and not getting a character.

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#### HEALTH THE ASSISTANT'S ONLY CAPITAL.

Health of body and mind is, as a rule, the only fund by which all classes of assistants hope to live. It is their chief and best inheritance. With this ample store they start fair in the world; but if by any means it is squandered, their only chance of success in life is gone. A fortune lost may be regained. Even a sullied reputation may in time be purged; but that priceless treasure—a sound constitution—once lost, is gone for ever. Health is, therefore, the only capital of all toilers in every department of life, and should be strictly guarded. This invaluable possession is drawn upon behind the counter to an alarming extent—indeed it is almost wholly consumed without any corresponding advantage or compensation, and those from whom it is filched are, for the most part, boy and girl apprentices, and young men and women below the age of twenty-one, unable to confront the ruthless system which mercilessly deprives them of their all. The adult assistants have, as a rule, passed through the period of apprenticeship under these debilitating conditions, and find themselves at the end of their term launched upon life with impaired health and weakened frames, instead of being robust and strong—fit to cope with the work of the world, as undoubtedly they should and would have been if their hours of labour had been reason-



able. In pursuing this investigation, it has often struck me as a most remarkable fact that there are so few elderly assistants to be found. One of two things must occur. Either they die off prematurely the victims of long hours, or their services are rejected, by reason of early decrepitude, in order to obtain the energies of younger persons who are paid less and can be more easily farmed on the establishment. For, strange as it may seem, the system of farming assistants, although it is probably to their immediate advantage and is decidedly profitable to the employer, distinctly discourages marriage and the employment of married men. Assistants scarcely dare marry, because they know that whereas it is difficult for a single man to get a situation, it is a thousand times more difficult for a married man to get one. I do not wish to deal with the question of wages, as my principal object is to endeavour to obtain a curtailment of the hours of labour on humanitarian principles ; but I may remark, parenthetically, that if married men had equal chances with single ones, marriage thus being encouraged, as it should be—the small salaries now paid would alone prohibit that step being taken. It is, to say the least, a cruel system to thus consume the ripening energies of healthy young persons, and then throw them off as worthless, only to devour a fresh supply.

#### THE INTERESTS OF THE COMMUNITY ARE INVOLVED.

Of course there must in all callings, and especially in such an exciting age as this, be a certain sacrifice of vital energy, but the destruction should be minimised as much as possible. Good cause should be shewn to justify the existence of any system involving loss of health. There is, however, no excuse for this system. The wholesale and subtle slaughter of shop assistants is as unnecessary as it is unprofitable, and has not the shadow of justification in either public utility or private convenience. On the contrary, the interests of the nation are injuriously affected by it. For, I take it, whenever any section of a community deteriorates mentally, morally, or physically from any cause whatever, the results are transmitted to the nation at large and posterity, increasing the evils as they advance. Suffering, irregularity, and feebleness in one part cannot remain isolated. Their effects spread as regularly and surely over the area of human life, as a disturbance caused in a lake gradually covers the whole surface with ever widening



ripples. We should never forget, however much absorbed by selfish considerations, that we are all members of a great commonwealth in which our national interests are identical. Every individual, however obscure, is a partner and joint-owner with the rest of the community in the strength or weakness, glory or disgrace, of the nation at large. For national purposes my strength is your property. Your power and ability, if it adds glory to the country, is my boast, and passes as a valuable inheritance to posterity. The health and strength of every boy and girl, and of every young man and woman, whether they stand behind the counter or not, should be your concern as well as mine. Their bodily weakness is a loss of power to the country. Their decrepitude means the beginning of national decay. It should be the aim of every well-regulated State to see that the young shall reach maturity without their growth being checked by unhealthy impediments, so that they may become the progenitors of a strong race—firm in their bodies and sound in their minds, not as overwrought persons become now, the parents of a feeble, degenerate progeny, the inheritors and, in their turn, transmitters of weakness and debility. In continental countries the young men are obliged to undergo a period of military training, which strengthens and develops their bodies at that transitory stage of life which is most critical, and although it is true that the bulk of the youths of this country are able to join the volunteer force, or enjoy other manly exercises, shop assistants are not able to do either one thing or the other, not for want of inclination, but simply because they are kept dawdling behind the counter unreasonably late every day, to the ruin of their health and the almost utter destruction of all manly qualities. The effects are unfortunately not confined to one town, district, or county, but are experienced from one end of the country to the other; in fact, wherever there is a large number of shops and keen competition, the assistants are invariably subjected to these long hours and the unhealthy conditions already described. Having regard to these facts, and remembering the extensive ramifications of the retail trades, surely a grievance, detrimental to the true interests of the State, is established, for no nation can afford with impunity to allow the bodily and mental powers of an intelligent and important section of the community to be destroyed without excuse, justification, or, in fact, any compensation whatever.



## LONG HOURS QUITE UNNECESSARY.

It is said, however, by some, that although the long hour system presses with undue severity upon the shop-keeping community, yet it is necessary to meet the wants and convenience of the purchasing public. To such a proposition I cannot for one moment assent,—even if a certain section of the public do find it convenient to purchase at late hours,—because for traders to enable them to do so by keeping open day and night is simply an unnecessary concession to what is no more than an artificial convenience, created by and founded upon an equally artificial and fallacious system. Retail traders and shopkeepers are merely distributors of all kinds of commodities. As a rule, they purchase wholesale from merchants or manufacturers, and obtain a commission or profit on the goods as they pass through their hands to the public. They stand mid-way between the producer and the consumer. Retail shops are, of course, usually situated in thoroughfares easily accessible to the general public, so that, so far, at all events, as the masses are concerned, all that they have to do is to walk a few yards to obtain any of the essentials to life and comfort; but it should be remembered that in spite of a keen and cutting competition the shopkeeper's goods are more indispensable to the public than the buyer's custom is to the seller. Food and raiment must be had by everyone. The shopkeeper has both food and clothing to sell, and whether he keeps them in stock a day more or a day less makes little or no difference to him. He can wait with composure. But the hungry, shivering man, although laden with wealth, cannot do without the shopkeeper. He is, therefore, master of the situation. Our personal wants do not generally come upon us suddenly. A man knows that he requires a new coat or hat or boots before nine or ten o'clock at night. Housekeepers and wives are well aware before eleven o'clock at night that food and cooking requisites will be needed for next day's consumption. In fact, the majority of people know full well their necessities before they arise, and are able, if so inclined, to prepare for them by purchasing early. Yet they delay, and may be found crowding the shops as late as ever they possibly can, without reflecting on the hardships thereby imposed on the assistants, who are probably ready to drop from fatigue as they serve these



dilatory shoppers, and are nevertheless obliged to assume a civility which it is impossible at that late hour they can reasonably feel.

No sufficient reason has or can be assigned by the supporters of late shopping to establish the necessity of the present system. The great bulk of the people are not obliged to live from hand to mouth, for in the majority of instances the money is as much at their disposal in the morning, or at all events before six o'clock, as it is at nine, ten, or eleven o'clock at night. Nearly all classes of workers are paid either on a Friday night or by one o'clock on a Saturday; and even if the week's money so received was the only capital at command, there is ample time to spend it before six or seven in the evening even on Saturdays, which is usually the busiest day of the week. But in reality the purchases of nearly all consumers are spread over the whole week, whilst the number of persons who have not sufficient money to purchase a day's or even a few days' necessaries in advance is comparatively small. Those, however, who from misfortune, poverty, or negligence are so reduced as to be obliged to spend the money as soon as they get it in order to live, must be taken into consideration, but their small wants, the most pressing of which is hunger, could be satisfied in many ways without imposing the necessity of shops keeping open to such late hours. There may be, and perhaps is, a small minority of workers who, on account of the exceptional circumstances of their callings and position, are barely able to subsist, whose earnings are not given to them until late on a Saturday. But even this class without any apparent inconvenience might so arrange as to make their small but necessary purchases within reasonable hours. Any inconvenience, however, that might accrue could be easily obviated by arrangements being made to have wages paid earlier, as the moment money is earned by workers whose only capital is their labour, it should be placed at their disposal for any purpose they desire. It therefore seems to me, viewing the position of buyers in their relation to sellers, that no such public necessity exists as justifies employers in keeping their shops open so many hours to the detriment, not only of the health of their assistants, but also, if they knew it, to their own manifest disadvantage. The demand is not increased by the shops keeping open; and the consumption of necessaries must in relation to this aspect of the question remain about



the same, whether the hours are short or long. But if there is any difference I incline to the opinion that the long hours tend to diminish the demand for necessaries and to increase the consumption of unnecessaries. For although it is a humiliating fact to be obliged to admit, it cannot be denied that very many of those who are the latest shoppers spend a large percentage of their hard earnings in the public-house, before either the draper, butcher, or the baker is thought of. It is a pitiable state of affairs, but sadly true. Time is squandered without stint in the public-house by persons who visit the shops at the very last moment, frequently just as the shutters are going up. I do not dispute that everyone has a right to spend their time and money as they think best, but it is obviously unfair for anyone to be a party to this cruel system of long hours, involving as it does so much suffering and loss to the shopkeepers and assistants, without the shadow of an excuse or any reasonable justification. The following few experiences establish this conclusively, as they are corroborated by the whole of the other evidence :—

Charles M., age 40, draper, Dean Street, Birmingham, also High Street, Deritend, Birmingham. I believe there are in every district in all large towns immense numbers of small tradesmen who hope to always keep open their shops late so as to catch some of the stray customers who are always out late shopping. In all large towns these small and unprincipled traders do the bulk of their trade after the principal tradesmen's shops are closed, say 8.30 or 9 P.M., and if the general body of shopkeepers closed still earlier, it would mean greater gain to these small traders. The long hours of labour cause assistants at an early age to be worn out, and are looked upon by employers as being almost worthless, same as old horseflesh. The same amount of business could be done from 8 A.M. to 7 P.M., winter and summer, and would be a great saving of gas in a winter, and less damage caused to the stocks of drapers. The last four or five years my health has given way, although previously I did not know what it was to be ill. My medical advisers assure me that I want more out-door exercise and fresh air, and that my premature breakdown is entirely attributable to the long hours. I believe that weekly half-holidays have not been a success through it not being a general closing, a large majority only having closed, leaving a small percentage of tradesmen to profit by keeping open. Could very well close at seven o'clock all the week including Saturdays. In large towns most of the manufacturers pay their workpeople on Friday night, and the others pay at two o'clock on Saturdays, thus giving plenty of time to shop before seven o'clock. My assistants have suffered in health,



especially the young ladies. I shall be glad to fall in with any rule that becomes general for giving my assistants more leisure, and would prefer to close at mid-day in preference to five o'clock once a week. I think it quite possible to shorten the hours of shop labour, but not by persuasion. I believe it will require an Act of Parliament compelling all retail traders to close their shops at a specified time, with a special clause allowing a few extra hours previous to the bank holidays when there is usually an extra trade done, say one week before each such holiday. I believe there is a very good feeling respecting the shortening of the hours of labour in shops. Three years ago I took the trouble to canvas this particular neighbourhood to close half-day on Wednesdays. I called upon nearly forty shopkeepers (drapers), and only had three objections : these proved fatal however. I tried the experiment independently for six months, but it did not prove a success, for I found that I lost many customers through it ; I have been in the drapery trade twenty-six years, nearly half of the time as an assistant.

T. S. G., Borough, S.E., age 58, drapers and house furnishers, carpet warehousemen, &c. The cause of long hours is want of unanimity amongst tradesmen in general, and oftentimes the avarice of individual tradesmen in a district, in a minority it is true, yet who thereby rule or break down the wish and endeavour of the majority, who would close early. The work could be done by all drapers and many other trades in much less time than now if all would agree to close, say 8 to 7 or 8 to 8 or 8 to 9, or the later might be 9 to 9. I have not suffered myself, but many of our young people, in our moderate hours, suffer from the want of more fresh air and shorter hours. The half-holidays break down for want of resolve in all to join in it ; or in other words, the avarice of the few, who will keep open that they may catch up what their more liberal-minded neighbour shuts out in their opinion. Shops might well shut at 6 or 7 five days a week, and the 6th day must depend on locality, but 9 or 10 ought and would meet the 6th day case if all would stick to the doing of it. Many assistants are suffering throughout the trade, particularly the young and females. We allow half-an-hour to each meal, and all ought to have that time allowed them. We may call our hours, winter, 8 to 7 ; autumn and spring, 8 to 7.30 ; summer, 8 to 8, four months each. Close at 2 on Saturday. And the closing at 5 on Thursdays to those who cannot close on the Saturday is a great boon. It can only be done by persuasion, for I quite fail to see how it can be otherwise done, except as regards youths under eighteen and females, who might perhaps be dealt with compulsorily. As chairman for many years of the South London Drapers' Early Closing Association, and which collapsed entirely from individuals, oftentimes young beginners who had been staunch supports of, and



advocates for early closing, whilst in our employ or in the employ of any and many other firms known for their support to, and advocacy of early closing, now on their own resources, keeping open late, aye, very late, and breaking down an early closing already fairly established in the district they come to. Or on the other hand, some one individual in a street or locality makes up his mind he ought to be allowed to keep open, or keep open an hour, say, beyond his neighbours in the same street or round the corner. He again breaks up the whole neighbourhood. Still, the only thing is—publicity and unity of action amongst the young people employed, who, I regret to say, in my experience, as soon as they get into an early closing house, cease at once or very soon after to support or work for in any way any earlier closing generally of all trades, which is the thing most needed as a public good to all employed in trade. The tardiness of the young people to work for early closing when once landed in an early closing house themselves is a remarkable fact; and if self predominates so forcibly in the employes themselves when still employes, can you wonder that as soon as they become employers they go in at once for self again to gain, as they think, another pull over their neighbour.

Thomas G., Lower Marsh, Lambeth, S.E., age 47, cheesemonger. The cause of long hours is the selfishness of some of the employers. The remedy is legislation. Same business could be done in two hours less. I am always fatigued before the end of the day. Disorganisation of employers and assistants prevents earlier closing. My assistants complain of rheumatics from exposure, and general aching of the legs and body. Legislation, by all means, is the true remedy. I think late shopping might be avoided to a great extent on Saturdays if employers would pay married and out-door assistants on Friday; that would enable their wives or housekeepers to make their purchases earlier.

Wm. Geo. D., High Street, Peckham, age 33, draper. Cause: the habit of the public in such neighbourhoods as this to shop late, and the fear among tradesmen to close before their neighbour lest a loss of custom should result. Legislation the only remedy. The same amount of business could easily be done between the hours of 8 A.M. and 7 or 8 P.M. Though of a strong constitution, have often felt quite exhausted, especially by midnight on Saturday. The cupidity of one or two tradesmen in the district prevents reform in the hours. My assistants all suffer from general weariness. I allow those in my employ half-an-hour for each meal, and a half day's holiday once a fortnight.. All attempts at persuasion will leave many districts as badly off as ever. Legislation to compel all to close will be the only effective means. Am very desirous of earlier closing. The result of long hours of standing is far more



calamitous than many are aware of, especially among females, who are afflicted all their lives by weaknesses brought about by the inordinate length of time they have had to stand when young. One very sad case I am personally acquainted with. Another consequence is the denial of means of self-improvement, which is rendered impossible for want of leisure, and many other evils resulting from late hours known only to those who are the victims of it.

Samuel M., silk mercer, Paternoster Row (a retail draper's assistant for several years). The cause is no doubt competition, and it is too much to expect larger shops to close while others who run competing shops should keep open. I would suggest that the Factory Act should be adapted to employers of all labour, so that young men and women should not stand behind the counter more than ten hours a day, allowing one hour for dinner and tea. It is a fact that if customers came earlier, as they would be obliged to do, the same amount of business could be done. In the lower neighbourhoods, as much is done after six o'clock as before that time. My health was completely broken down after twelve months in London, working in the East End from 8 A.M. to half-past 9 P.M. ordinary days, and 8 A.M. to 12 midnight Saturdays, and this in a close, ill-ventilated shop, and the bedrooms almost worse through over-crowding. I regained my health after spending six months in Devonshire. The long hours tell most on young men and women, especially the latter. I have seen them carried out of the shop utterly prostrate, and after lying down a short time or in some cases having a little stimulant administered, stagger into the shop again, knowing that their book of takings depended on the Saturday night, and that their situation depended on their coming up to the mark. It is horrible to contemplate on the effects of such slavery. The internal business hours of first class establishments, wholesale houses, some of which are owned by presidents and patrons of the early closing societies, where night after night in certain departments, employés are working for six or seven hours overtime, in order that the employers shall keep up their palatial private establishments, and draw from the firm immense sums every year, would on judicial enquiry reveal a state of slavery with which the negro might favourably compare. I send this by request of the Rev. W. H. T.

John Dowding P., Market Place, Upper Holloway Road, draper, age 39. In reference to cause, I should say it arises from want of combined action on part of shopkeepers, and as for consequences most injurious, especially to females. Without the least possible doubt three hours an ordinary day and two hours on Saturday could be saved. I am sometimes thoroughly exhausted, and sick of even making money through the long hours. Even gold can be



bought too dearly if it is in exchange for health and life. The cause of the weekly holiday failing is want of determined action, and the miserable minority of a few who stand out for fear of their returns going back. I may say that nine out of fifteen who started the movement in June 1882 still close, and I intend doing so in spite of all, should there be any further break, finding my trade does not suffer. My assistants suffer very much, more especially the young women, who sometimes are obliged to give up. I have for years held only one opinion upon the question, and can say positively, after twenty-four years' experience, that moral persuasion is worthless ; nothing short of legislation will be of any permanent benefit. I am sorry to state my own wife is at the present time confined to her bed through the constant strain of continued standing behind the counter, and my medical man informs me he is afraid she will never permanently recover. The remarks I have made in reference to the five o'clock Thursday movement refer of course to our immediate district, there being a large number who followed us in Lower Holloway, Finsbury Park, Kentish and Camden Towns, &c., who have all ceased to close at that hour, but we started without them, and we do not mean their action to influence us. I may lay claim to having promoted it in this neighbourhood.

Hiram B. draper, Battersea Park Road, S.W., age 36. I think the following instance is the principal cause of late hours in my business. Two and a-half years ago my shop was closed punctually at nine o'clock, Saturday excepted. A new shop was opened about that date ; the firm closed nearer ten o'clock than nine, consequently it has been the cause of me closing at 9.30 or 9.40. Shopkeepers probably will not give you this as a reason, but I can answer for this personally. Undoubtedly business could be done in less time considerably, if the working man, who will not work, say more than eight or nine hours a day, will not be the cause of us working thirteen hours. I feel fagged out on Sundays after the excessive hours each day and on Saturday. If not generally admitted, my opinion is that the deficiency in the takings caused by one day's early closing is not made up the other part of the week, and the employer has no desire to benefit himself or his assistants out of business. I think it only possible by compulsion if a man will not close on Bank holidays, which is the case in this neighbourhood. I do not fancy he would be persuaded to shorten the hours of labour.

C. B., Grove House, Stratford, E., age 48, draper. Causes of long hours are the selfishness of human nature. Public opinion not being sufficiently aroused to be in sympathy with legislation. I have proved that the same business can be done in much less time. When I came here twelve years ago, the place was open till 8, and



10 on Saturdays, and 9 o'clock in summer; now close at 7 in winter, 8 in summer, 5 on Thursday, no later on Saturday. I do not suffer personally beyond fatigue; although as an assistant twenty-five years ago, it has been an effort to get upstairs to bed; but assistants applying to me constantly complain. Assistants in my employ do not complain; but many have come to me because of my short hours. The legislation ought to take in all of each trade. A shop because kept by man, wife, and children, no paid assistants, ought not to be allowed to keep open, if others are compelled to close.

J. W. G., Walworth Road, age 44, draper. Causes: 1st. competition; 2d. customers preferring to shop late. It is gradually undermining the health of all who have to work such long hours; legislation in my opinion is the only remedy. All business could be done between 9 A.M. and 7 P.M., and 9 P.M. on Saturdays. I suffer very much, and have to take trips into the country occasionally to recruit my health, but assistants cannot do this. One cause of the weekly holiday falling through is its not being general. Customers travel to those neighbourhoods where shops are open, hence falling off of trade and dissatisfaction in neighbourhoods that close. It is rarely we get a young lady who is healthy, they are as a rule weak and delicate. We have long been persuaded that persuasion is absolutely useless in our neighbourhood, yet they mostly wish for earlier hours; we do. Having canvassed our road and neighbourhood amongst drapers and furnishers, we are persuaded that any further effort towards voluntary closing would be mere waste of time and effort, therefore although we wish for shorter hours would refuse to move in any voluntary effort again. In some instances we were actually abused, and told to mind our own business.

Sidney Samuel S., High Street, Peckham, age 48, fancy draper. Cause: want of unanimity among tradesmen generally. The hours impair health. Remedy: Act of Parliament to make earlier closing compulsory. It is a fact that the same amount of business might be done in about eight or nine hours. I suffer from continued headache, and have done so for years; temporary relief when away from business for recreation, but to return when again at the counter. I have suffered a great deal from tender feet from the long standing. Want of confidence between us breaks through all holidays. All my assistants have suffered, even the most robust; one about seventeen left about fifteen months ago, and has been ailing ever since. I already allow the half-hour for meals, and would willingly limit the hours of labour to twelve (they only work twelve and a half now), Saturdays excepted; and I would agree to the weekly half-holiday. I have tried persuasion, having been a member of the "Early Closing Committee" here; my brother



tradesmen seemed to look upon it almost as a personal favour to me to close. We started it among drapers, tailors, chemists, and watchmakers, and after five or six weeks the Thursday five o'clock closing fell through. We, the committee, had personally visited all the tradespeople in this district, and my experience thus far leads me to conclude that the matter cannot be carried through without Government aid. We worked hard and stuck to it for weeks, and advertised it thoroughly.

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This evidence, and that which I have set out hereafter, clearly demonstrates that all the business now transacted in shops in from thirteen to seventeen hours a-day might, without loss or inconvenience, but indeed with positive gain to all concerned, be compressed within nine or ten hours at the most. Yet it is a remarkable fact that the longer the shops remain open, the later the customers will make their purchases; and I verily believe that if shops were kept open until one o'clock every morning the bulk of the business would be done even later than it is now, and persons would be found coming in at one o'clock just as the shutters were going up. The only logical inference, therefore, is that the more the late section of the public are pampered and encouraged in this matter the worse they will become, and that shopkeepers create late shopping by keeping open late; consequently, if the hours are curtailed late shopping must disappear. The unthinking and improvident purchaser knows full well that access can be had to the shop almost at any hour, he therefore keeps his wife or landlady waiting until nearly closing time for the public-houses, when a considerable diminution has been made in his earnings. Now from this point of view, if from no other, public-houses do seriously interfere with legitimate trade, and I should like to see all workmen think of the shop first, and the public-house, if at all, last. If shops closed early the thoughtless people to whom I refer would be far more likely to take their full wages home, or to the shopkeeper, than they are now. At present, in many instances, so-called enjoyment consumes a great deal of the week's money, and only a small balance or credit is left for the shopkeeper. This should be reversed for moral as well as economical reasons. It should be the aim of all reformers to instil into the people principles of prudence, self-denial, and economy, without which men and women speedily lose their



self-control, and fall to the lowest depths in the social scale. If we remember this, and going further regard this question from an abstract right point of view, I take it that I have no right to do anything which is calculated to inflict pain or loss on any of my fellow creatures. By shopping late when the assistants should be recruiting their health or enjoying leisure, I am a party to the iniquitous system by which my brother's or sister's health is being ruined. If I realise this, and act up to my conviction, so far, at all events, as I am concerned a sentiment against shopping late will be encouraged, and thus far good will be done. This is the only way in which the public can voluntarily assist to relieve the hardships resulting from late hours, and if a poll could be taken I believe a large majority of the public would be found willing to pledge themselves to shop within reasonable hours. But the task of creating such a sentiment and reducing it to a practical form is beset with difficulties which appear to be almost insuperable. The public are, almost unconsciously, parties to the hardships, and would, I believe, cheerfully fall in with any reasonable curtailment of the hours. Besides, if the late shoppers were obliged to purchase early, a spirit of prudence and foresight would be cultivated. People would be taught to look beyond the present hour or day—to anticipate their wants—to prefer necessities to indulgences, and to avoid being parties to the infliction of pain. If these are reasonable conclusions it is evident that an improved system would benefit not only the assistants but the employers, and considerably elevate the moral tone of late and thoughtless purchasers.

#### FOOD AND VENTILATION.

Although the long hours, the standing, and the inadequate times allowed for meals are the principal grievances of which the majority of assistants have to complain, there are others which scarcely lie within the province I have selected. Establishments in which the food is bad and the sleeping accommodation inadequate are fortunately in a minority, but the evidence before me proves that many employers carry their selfishness so far as to render it impossible for their assistants to be healthy on account of the coarseness and insufficiency of the food supplied, and the overcrowding or ill-ventilation of bedrooms. With the latter I shall deal further on, but I am



afraid the food grievance must be settled by the assistants themselves. Nevertheless, if these lines are read by any shopkeeper who feeds his apprentices and assistants as if they were paupers or criminals, I trust that his conscience will tell him that wealth so acquired is tainted, and that there is nothing so despicable or cowardly as the exercise of petty tyranny over persons who are powerless to protect themselves. Here are one or two statements as to sleeping accommodation and ventilation.

A. A. C., draper's assistant, after corroborating the others as to long hours and their results, says, "Every employer whose assistants live on the premises should provide a separate bed for each person, and the bedrooms should be spacious and well ventilated. In many small establishments, and sometimes in large ones, the assistants are huddled together in rooms that cannot possibly be healthy with so many, and when the shop ceiling is low, we are stifled both day and night. You will scarcely believe it, but it frequently happens that assistants who remain any length of time in the same house, may have to sleep, consecutively, with over a dozen fresh assistants, no matter in what state of health they may be. It is no use objecting to so many strange bed-fellows; you must either comply with the arrangements or leave. Surely it is not unreasonable to wish to have a bed to oneself, and it savours of abject servility to be obliged to sleep with anyone the employer chooses to introduce.

W. R., Bow. In answer to your questions as to my experience of the sanitary state of sleeping apartments of some houses of business. Only a few years ago I lived in a house where there was one room in which two young men slept; and so damp, that in summer and winter the walls were always perfectly wet, and the clothing would be perfectly damp in the morning although placed on the bed during the night. During the time I was in this house, several young men, who slept in this room, left through ill health—and no wonder! and one from an attack of rheumatics, from which he never quite recovered. Of course there are many houses with decent bedrooms, but in my long experience I have seen some that are only *sleeping places*, not bedrooms; *badly ventilated*, not sufficient bedding in the winter, and so *crowded* as not to be even *decent*. We have inspectors for workshops, factories, and workrooms, why not inspectors for the sleeping apartments and lavatories of houses of business? Do you think that the assistants, after a hard day's labour, and sleeping in such a vitiated atmosphere, can rise refreshed by their night's rest and fit for the labour of the day? Put the question to any assistants who sleep in such dens, and hear what they say about it.



Walter D. H., Mile End Road. I am the son of a draper, formerly in business in the town of Poole, Dorset. I learnt the trade under him, and at the age of 16 went as an improver for 6 months to Messrs — of Abingdon, of whom I can speak in the highest terms, the hours being good, and everything as well as could be expected for a business house. After that I went to Mr G. R., of Woolwich, where I stayed thirteen months; the hours were from 8 A.M. till 9 P.M., but we were more often half past and sometimes nearly 10, before we left the shop; on Saturdays from 11 till half past. The food was, on the whole, as good as could be expected, and fairly cooked; meat only once a day, except on Saturdays, when we had it for supper. The sleeping accommodation was far from being satisfactory, five young men being in a room, which should have only had three, being very hot in consequence of its being directly over the shop. The time allowed for meals was, breakfast before we came in, dinner as soon as we could get through it, and a quarter of an hour for tea, twenty minutes allowed afterwards for dressing. Besides this we had no opportunity of seeing friends, etc., and to ask for time was almost certain to meet with a refusal. The next place was Mr A. —, High Street, Deptford, which was the worst I have been in; the hours were from 8 A.M. till 9 P.M., and 11 P.M. on Saturdays, but as in the former case they frequently extended considerably beyond that time. The food was not nearly so good in quality either as at the last; comfort was a thing unknown, there being no sitting-room provided. The bedroom in which I slept with a fellow-assistant was at the top of the house in a garret; the bed was very hard, and there being no means of properly ventilating the room, it was very close in hot weather, and would frequently smell so bad that you would be compelled to wait for a few moments before entering it. I only stayed here four months, and I believe that if I had not left when I did, my health would have broken down, and I know that one young man who stayed there longer than I did went home seriously ill. The time allowed for meals was a quarter of an hour for breakfast and tea, and dinner as quickly as possible. I never had a moment to myself the whole time I was there, and on Sundays I was so uncomfortable I used to go off in the morning anywhere, and not return till the last thing at night. After leaving here I went to Bournemouth, where I was in a situation for eleven months; but living partly at home, I can say nothing as to the accommodation, the hours being good. I then returned to London and obtained my present situation. The hours are 8.30 A.M. till 9.15 P.M. on five, and 11 or 11.15 P.M. on Saturdays, but as in the two former cases, it is frequently later before we get out. We enjoy the Thursday evening closing, but it is an arrangement which may at any moment break through. The food here is of the usual quality—meat once a day, except Saturdays. Time allowed for meals—breakfast before business, dinner as quickly as



possible, twenty minutes for tea. The accommodation is fair, one or two rooms having more in them than could be desirable. The work here is of an exceedingly hard and laborious nature, owing to an insufficient number of hands being kept ; and to some the effect this has, four or five of the male hands have been to the doctor within the last two months, who has in every case made the long hours responsible for the ailments, or else has said that they have been greatly to blame for them. Several of the female hands have been laid aside for some days. I have myself not suffered greatly from the effects of the long hours, physically being of a robust and healthy constitution, and a total abstainer, but I know of cases, and have heard of others, in which they have a very damaging effect. The effects of the long hours on young people generally, in regard to morality and religion, is also very serious, there being in many cases nothing but the streets for them after they are released from business. I would say that probably one-half of the drapers' assistants in London never enter a place of worship, and many others only once a day. I am myself a regular attendant, and often find it very difficult to keep myself from falling asleep. The habit is amongst many to lie in bed all the morning. I find it has been alleged that there is a want of sympathy amongst us in regard to the efforts which are being made to remove this evil ; but this, where it exists, arises because assistants believe that legislation will alone cure the evil, moral suasion having been tried so long, and in the east and south-east of London with so little success, we begin to despair of any settlement by this means. Employers generally see the evil, and see its remedy only in legislation. I would like to say that there are times when we are called upon to work even longer than the hours I have stated, at stock-taking, and I have worked till twelve and one o'clock, and up again at six for several days in succession, and never received one penny, or one moment of time extra in return, and have even been told I am unreasonable when I have asked for time to bury a relation. I know also of a young man who wanted to attend his father's funeral, and was almost refused, because he was told he could do no good by going to the funeral ; such instances of petty tyranny are by no means rare.

J. B. C., draper's assistant. I give you particulars of the sleeping accommodation in two places I have been at. At one the room in which I slept was about 5 yards long and 3 yards wide and 2 yards high, as near as I can guess. There are two beds in this room, and two persons sleep in this room. It is pretty comfortable, and numbers 2, 3, 4, and 5 were much about the same, but the bedrooms at the top of the house are something disgraceful. When it rains, the water comes through the roof and wets the beds, and then the young men have to sleep in them without being dried. The paper all off the walls through the rain, and, in fact, the top



rooms are more fit for pigsties than bedrooms. At the present place in the large room in which I now sleep there are nine beds, and ten persons sleep in this room. It is very damp. The size is—length, 9 yards, breadth  $5\frac{1}{2}$  yards, height  $1\frac{3}{4}$  yards 6 inches. (There is very little ventilation.) In another room, which is  $9\frac{1}{2}$  yards long,  $6\frac{1}{4}$  yards wide,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  yards high, there are six beds, and six persons sleep in the room. In another room there are three beds, and three persons sleep in it, and the room is very cold in winter; there is no comfort whatever in this room. The fourth room in which the porters sleep is something disgraceful for any human being to sleep in. There is but very little ventilation, and it is more fit for a storeroom than a bedroom.

Alfred K., 21 years, tailor's assistant. In my first situation a tailor and clothier three years, and the present situation two years. When in my former situation I used to start at 8 in the morning, leaving at 10 on the week nights, though on many occasions it would be 10.30, and 12 on Saturdays being the recognised closing time, but in the busy time we have worked till 1 on Sunday morning. In the present situation I used to start at 8.30 till 9.30 week days, Saturdays 11.30, but for the last twelve months we close at 8.30 on week evenings, 10 Saturday, Thursday at 5. In all my situations we have one hour for dinner, and half-an-hour for tea. When I entered business I was in perfect health, but on leaving my first situation I was obliged to go out of town for three months to recruit my health, or else the continuous standing and the unhealthy gases in the shops (it being a low ceiling and well-lighted shop), no doubt, would have brought on consumption. But now, owing to being in a better ventilated shop, and the great improvement in the hours, I am enjoying fairly good health. My feelings were that I cared little for anything, being too tired to enter into any amusement or recreation. On Saturday I used to feel awfully depressed, for there would be no conveyance to take me home, about one-and-a-half miles distant; and I hardly knew which leg to put forward first, and would almost have done away with myself rather than go through such a time again. Never attended church on Sunday morning, being too tired. I live off the premises. There are about half the number under twenty in present situation, and in the former there was three out of seven. I have a weekly half-holiday, closing on Thursday at five o'clock; but until eighteen months ago I never had any holiday, with the exception of the Bank holidays. I know a young assistant, a little older than myself, who is now almost always under the doctor; he was in my former firm for nine years, and was laid up ill, and he was discharged, and he then was under the doctor for a month, being confined to his room. I find by my experience, being both in a late and early closing establishment, that the busiest hours are in the evening, and that the business is done quite as well, and I can fully



testify that no loss is made in our establishment by closing one hour earlier. The shop being open, the customers put off their shopping till the last moment. I had fifty-two drapers consented to close, and closed for six months, and on account of one opening it all broke through. Having tried my utmost to maintain and keep together the Thursday five o'clock movement in my district, and being surrounded by well-worked districts in the same cause, I am of opinion that no voluntary effort will ever remove the existing evils. And I enclose a proof of trying to keep together the earlier closing every night, and its total failure.

John B., draper's assistant. As to sleeping accommodation, most of the places are decent, but something ought to be done with the others. Since I was fifteen, and I am now twenty-five, I have been in five situations ; three of them were satisfactory as to food and bed-rooms, but the other two were abominable. The ceilings were low to begin with, and the shops were small, but a large trade was done. The bed-rooms were almost over the shop, and all the hot gas went up and filled the whole house, and when we went to bed, it was just like going into an oven. The rooms were like garrets, and six of us slept in each bed-room, and I am sure that three was quite plenty. I used to perspire something awful, and I felt worse when I got up than I did when I went to bed. You may guess I got out of these places as soon as I could. But there are lots like them. I could take you to a place where there are sixty young men and women, and the accommodation and ventilation is disgraceful. They do a big trade, and I expect a big building will be put up soon, made out of the flesh and blood of assistants. In many houses the food is coarse and badly cooked. It isn't very tempting, I can tell you, when we're choked up with dust, and about poisoned with gas.

E. S. M., Prince of Wales Road. I am very glad you have inserted sanitation in your Bill for early closing ; it is very much needed. I hope it will be passed. I will give you an instance falling under my own notice the winter before last, in Holborn, at a pawnbroker's. In the month of January two lads, both sleeping in one bed, caught that most loathsome disease, the itch, but in a very mild form. The employer took them to a medical man in Fetter Lane, and he gave them ointment to anoint themselves with at night ; he also, I believe, ordered them to have a warm bath every morning, but the latter was not carried into effect. Their sleeping place was and is, I believe, at the present time in a warehouse at the top of the house open from side to side and front to back, surrounded with pledges of all kinds ; pledges to right of them, pledges to left of them, pledges in front of them, all booked and numbered ; the stacking being the only protection from the sharp winds of winter, and affording a fine refuge for vermin in the summer. Well, these two poor lads—remember it was the winter



time—every morning after having their breakfast took up a pail of warm water, and at the foot of their bed entirely divested themselves of their clothing, and with the warm water washed the ointment off each other, the result was they both caught severe colds, one of them a delicate lad. It laid him up, and in the end they had to go home. One of the parents afterwards called and complained of the treatment of his son, but no notice was taken. Right over their bed is or was a large fanlight, and when it rains and the wind is strong, the rain is beaten between the glass and falls upon their bed. They had some old sacks hung underneath to prevent all of it falling upon them. One of the young men slept in a room forming part of the warehouse, and it is only washed out once or twice a year a day or two before stocktaking, and a clean counterpane placed on the bed. All of this and more is known to the employer. I tried to have it inserted in the "Pawn-brokers' Gazette," but they declined the greater portion of this statement. I can prove by letters.

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#### PERSUASIVE REMEDIES.

Such is the brief but imperfect narrative of the conditions under which the majority of shop and similar assistants are obliged to live; and whether we look at their position from the point of view of humanitarians, political economists, philanthropists, or Christian men and women, this system of long hours by which so many are oppressed stands self-condemned. It is not, however, sufficient to pronounce a system bad. Those who realise the gravity of the evils should endeavour to devise a remedy. To witness the infliction of pain, or the violation of natural rights, with the ability to prevent it, involves a serious responsibility. We naturally expect those who are oppressed to emancipate themselves by every legitimate means at their disposal, yet it should be remembered that neutral spectators are morally bound to render all the assistance in their power. Accordingly we find that traders, assistants, and benevolent persons have from time to time and in various combinations attempted to remove the evil, but unfortunately without any appreciable success. The only method hitherto adopted has been to endeavour to persuade shopkeepers to close either earlier every night or on one day only. Many small local associations have come into existence, and have passed away, and many still remain, but the largest next to the Shop Hours Labour League is "The Early Closing Association,"



with headquarters in London. This society claims to have done a great deal for the assistants, and there can be no doubt that it has done considerable good. But in judging associations or individuals we must not only look at the good they claim to have done, but also have regard to that which they might or should have accomplished. Judged by this standard the Early Closing Association has failed to effectually grapple with the evil, because the hours in the majority of instances are as protracted or more so than they were when the association commenced its career. This is perhaps not attributable to a want of zeal, but may probably be ascribed to the principles by which its leaders have been actuated, and also, in some measure, to the serious difficulties to be overcome. A great deal should have been done in forty years, which is, I believe, the length of time the society has been in existence. There should be much to show for the money and energy expended during the course of nearly half a century on one particular object. I believe I am correct in saying that the rate of progress is far from being satisfactory to the shop-assistants of the country. The Board of Management of the Early Closing Association has, I believe, during the greater part of its existence been composed almost exclusively of employers, having establishments in fashionable localities, who consequently have not come into personal contact with the hardships to be removed. This fact coupled with the circumstance that assistants have been (so far as having a voice in the management is concerned) steadily kept in the background, may serve to explain the apathy shown, and small progress made by those who have had for so many years the dearest interests of shop-assistants committed to their charge. Their motives may be, and no doubt are excellent, but I cannot refrain from condemning their want of energy. In these and similar matters an ounce of practice is worth a ton of theory and a thousand platitudes into the bargain. Such are the conclusions forced upon the assistants who have determined that there shall be no more delay in ventilating their grievances and hastening a remedy. Therefore The Shop Hours Labour League has been established on such a basis as to admit employers and assistants on terms of perfect equality, so far as the management of the League is concerned. The result is that within the short space of two years a large and powerful organisation has been formed, composed of shopkeepers and assistants of both sexes,



as well as many philanthropic persons and public men. The primary objects of the League are the permanent curtailment of the hours of labour in shops and similar places, to obtain a weekly half holiday for all assistants, and to protect the health and general interests of male and female assistants. The League has nothing to do with wages. Its leading principle is to preach and enforce, as far and widely as possible, the gospel of humanity. But there is an essential difference in principle between the Shop Hours Labour League and the Early Closing Association. The League seeks State interference in the form of an Act of Parliament, whilst endeavouring to do as much good as possible by persuasion. The old Association altogether ignores legislation as a remedy, and relies solely on the voluntary or persuasive system in spite of forty years experience of its inefficacy. The League, however, I believe beyond doubt, embodies the sentiments of the majority of liberal minded traders, as well as the opinions of almost if not the whole of the assistants of both sexes. Its principles and programme have already received the assent of upwards of a quarter of a million of persons, and the approbation of the majority of shopkeepers and assistants throughout the country is merely a question of time.

#### THE EFFORTS TO CLOSE EARLY.

During the past two years great exertions have been made by the League, The Early Closing Association, the South London Thursday Five o'clock Closing Association, and several smaller societies, in order to obtain the closing of shops at five o'clock on only one day of the week, as a relief to those concerned. All these societies are equally desirous, I believe, of curtailing the hours on every day of the week, throughout the country, and by reason of the force of the agitation carried on by the League all concerned have been stirred up and an unusual effort has been made. The manner in which this attempt to obtain the half holiday has been made is as follows. Certain members or officers of each local committee waited personally upon the shopkeepers in their own district, with a form which they were asked to sign, pledging themselves to close, say at five o'clock on every Wednesday or Thursday afternoon. In many districts unanimity in certain trades was obtained, and the weekly closing at five o'clock on



one day followed. But the trouble and anxiety necessary to accomplish this is only known to those who have had to argue with and to persuade the cantankerous opponents of the scheme. From evidence laid before me it seems that in many instances, those benevolent traders and assistants who have sacrificed their time and worked energetically, without fee or reward, merely to obtain these three or four hours relaxation a week, have been in the first instance treated rudely and, indeed, almost ordered out of the shops by men, who, although few in number, held the key of the situation, and were afterwards the first to break through arrangements to which they subsequently pretended solemnly to agree. The truth is, however, that the men who at first refuse and then agree to close, merely do so in order to deal a stab at the movement. They endeavour at the outset to frustrate any suggested arrangement by openly opposing it, and treating the volunteer canvassers contemptuously, but when they see a majority in favour of closing early, they appear reluctantly to yield and join the movement, conscious, at the same time, of their ability to overturn the whole arrangement. What is the result? The five o'clock closing makes a fair start, and continues satisfactorily for a few weeks, but the unwilling adherents soon begin their operations. Mr Till is caught serving at the side door after the shop is supposed, by his neighbours, to be closed. Mr Timid declares that his door shall not be closed until all the others are shut, and consequently he is found gazing all round until a quarter past five. This conduct does not please Mr Reluctant, who is determined to keep open as long as anyone, he therefore takes good care next week to outdo his neighbour by keeping open until half-past five. The following week Mr Dauntless says that he will not play at closing and have his customers taken from him in that manner, and he resolves to sacrifice the holiday. Then the number who close lessens every week until in a short time there is no five o'clock closing whatever in that locality.

In other parts where there is a fair chance of the movement being more lasting, a new man enters the district and opens a shop, and not only refuses to be bound by his neighbours, but keeps open later every day in order to make a trade by pandering to late shoppers, and catching his fellow traders' customers. The same result follows, and all the shops re-open to a man. Such is the manner in which the



five o'clock closing breaks down. But in many districts all attempts to obtain even temporary unanimity prove useless. It frequently happens that out of a hundred shopkeepers seventy-five are willing to close, but the remaining twenty-five per cent. steadily refuse to do so in spite of the fervid entreaties of their neighbours. These men are perfectly aware that there is no chance of even giving the system a trial unless they yield, and conscious of their power and independence they become as hardened as adamant. There is thus no chance of early closing in localities where such men as these live. This is the system of operation that has been tried over and over again for upwards of a quarter of a century. Early closing has been tried first in one part and then in another. First on one day then on another. Persuasion in all its forms has been used by men who were able to make it effective if it could have been so. But taken as a whole the benefits to the assistants have been merely temporary and partial. Even now, after so much exertion, the five o'clock closing has in many districts never reached the point of trial. In many it has been given up, and in others it is in a very perilous condition.

#### THE SELFISH OBSTRUCTIONISTS.

The so-called remedy of persuasion which shews such results is unquestionably rotten to the core and inadequate to cope with the evil. Many of the employers may not object to have the matter played with in this discreditable manner, but speaking on behalf of the generous employers and all the assistants, I am convinced that they are determined to be put off no longer. If employers are not unanimous in agreeing to close, the assistants are resolved that their hours shall be shortened by an appeal to legislative force. Of course it is unreasonable to expect three-fourths to close if the other fourth remain open. Such a course would be suicidal. The public could not be expected to discriminate and to refuse to buy of the men who had selfishly remained open. Purchasers, as a rule, act upon the free trade principle of buying in the best and cheapest market, wherever that may be, so long as it is conveniently near, regardless of whether the man approves or disapproves of the early closing movement. The man who closes at a reasonable time, and leaves his selfish neighbour



open, is simply helping to fill his rival's till by shutting out customers who, in all human probability would, without thinking, and for the sake of convenience, patronise the shop that keeps open the latest. Few traders can afford to sacrifice their trade interests in such a manner, be they ever so well disposed towards their assistants. I candidly confess that if I were a shopkeeper I should be an early closer by choice, but I should never agree to close, either on a Thursday or any other day at five o'clock, unless there was perfect unanimity, and all my competitors closed. I should make a point of being at business as early and as late as my opponent. But I should spare no efforts to obtain unanimity, not only for closing earlier on one day in the week, but also to procure an earlier closing on every day. It should not be forgotten that shopkeepers who refuse either to close early, or to join any movement for that purpose, have a perfect right to remain open, and no one is justified in interfering with that right in any way except by persuasion. In this country a man may be very eccentric and defy the good sense of the majority of the people, but as law-abiding subjects we must not coerce or intimidate him in order to enforce our views. All that can be done is to use the power of persuasion in all the forms of which it is capable, and then if we fail to effect a change, we must leave the person to pursue his calling in his own way, and in his own time. The man, however, who persistently thwarts the wishes of his neighbours and refuses to listen to the just entreaties of his brother traders and of his assistants must expect to be criticised. And it appears to me that by preventing the weekly half-holiday from becoming general throughout the large towns, the obstructionists have laid themselves open to the severest censure. For if a poll of the shopkeepers of the country were taken I believe that there would be found to be a majority in favour of shortening considerably the hours on every day of the week, and yet the assistants are debarred from having even two or three hours once a week by the selfishness and stubbornness of a refractory, miserable, miserly, minority. I may here properly interpolate a few cases from the evidence to show the opinion of practical men on this point:—

W. G. T., Above Bar, Southampton, age 50, draper. The cause I consider to be the impossibility of making, by voluntary



means, the adoption of earlier hours universal. The consequences I believe to be the frequent cause of ill health amongst those employed in shops. The only remedy I believe to be Parliamentary interference in some shape. Most certainly, in our trade, I think seven o'clock might be the hour for closing in my neighbourhood. My health has been better since I have been able to close earlier. I attribute it in a great measure to being able to get out more in the fresh air. The refusal of a portion of the tradesmen to fall in with the movement causes all efforts to fail. My hours are not excessively long, being from 8.30 A.M. to 7 P.M., and 9 P.M. Saturday. In the summer we close at 8 P.M., but we are an exception. I allow my assistants half-an-hour for each meal, but many houses in my trade do not. With regard to the half-holiday, I would gladly give it if generally adopted by my trade in this town. By persuasion certainly not. I believe the only way to obtain shorter hours is by the help of Parliament. I decidedly wish to have even earlier hours than those I at present adopt. With regard to the half-holiday movement in this town, I consider it failed entirely through the action of some of the tradesmen who refused to join in the movement. The public appeared to me to heartily respond to the appeal to refrain from shopping after five o'clock on Wednesday. I arrive at this conclusion from the fact, that for several Wednesdays after I was obliged to reopen on that day, we did no business after five o'clock, showing the public were quite willing to fall in with the movement. The blame, therefore, must rest with the selfish tradesmen. I have seen the attempt made in other places to obtain an earlier hour for closing by "moral suasion," but, after about a month, these attempts have invariably failed, and things have become as bad as ever. The break down has always been caused by one or two men breaking through the agreement to close, thereby compelling all in the same trade to keep open, as unfortunately in this matter the very small minority can impose their will on the majority.

Edwin G., Portobello Road, Nottinghill, age 32, boot-factor. The cause is the wish of a few weak-minded shopkeepers to secure the shut-out custom of others who close early. Many tradesmen also, through the unsympathetic feelings manifested by the public, in shopping at all times and places, are forced to submit to the abominable long hours, in order to pay their way. The only remedy, an Act of Parliament. Most decidedly the business could be done in half the time. The weekly holiday failed through the despicable meanness of a few sordid men, who, to gain a few pence, sold their honour and respectability. The public never will shop early unless made to do so. No doubt my assistants have suffered, and yet we close the earliest in our trade. Persuasion is no good, it ought to have been given up years ago; Act of Parliament is the only thing.



John B. S., Caledonian Road, N., age 40, boot-factor. Causes—because of some few that would not shut up, and the consequence was that others were afraid of losing the custom, and so opened. A uniform system for large towns like London should be adopted, because there are some who would keep open all night if any people were about. The same amount of business could be done in two-thirds of the present shop open time. Not suffered seriously, as I always leave my business for one day in a week for bicycle riding when fine ; assistants could not do that. The want of confidence one in the other, and the large amount of competition and unfriendliness amongst those of the same trade, is the cause of the holidays breaking down. My assistants suffer in spirits and temper and health, when they see other people enjoy themselves. The long hours must be injurious, as every sensible man knows. I could not allow them half-an-hour for meals always. Sometimes when busy I do not get five minutes ; but never call them, they may have fifteen, twenty, twenty-five, or sometimes more if not busy. I should like to close earlier. Persuasion is no good because of ambition. Anything which shortens hours will benefit the employer. Goods must be bought, if not at night then it must be in the day time ; and as it would save gas, it would thus save the ruin of a lot of my stock, which gets spoiled through the gas. And it would lessen the risks of fire, because half the fires occur just after shutting up, because it is done in a hurry, and improper supervision as to putting out lights, but it is done quick and off to bed ; whereas, if it was done at seven, it would be discovered and so put out. And there are a lot of reasons for closing early.

Henry H., oil and colourman, age 40. I think that we should be compelled to close Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, not later than 8 P.M. ; and on Saturday, 10 P.M. I feel a great strain on the nerves, system, and body generally. One tradesman, which I know as a fact, caused a whole district to lose the benefit of a half-holiday. My assistants all grumble about long hours, but know that it cannot be helped unless something is done for them. I would allow with pleasure five o'clock on Thursday closing. I do not think it possible to alter the hours of closing, only by an Act of Parliament.

F. C., age 44, Portobello Road, Notting Hill, cheesemonger and poulterer. If all shops were to close early, there would be the same amount of business done (it rests entirely with the shopkeepers) ; the public would soon fall in with them, by shopping early. Legislation is the only remedy. Same business could be done in two hours less. I have not suffered personally. Cause of holiday breaking down is jealousy of one tradesman with the other, therefore there is no unanimity. The hours should be : four days at 8 P.M., one day at 9 P.M., Saturdays 11, instead of 12.15 P.M.



I have assistants who complain of the long hours, and standing. I already allow them three quarters of an hour to breakfast, one hour dinner, half-an-hour tea, and close every Thursday at five o'clock; and have done so for eighteen months, in spite of what my neighbours do, and don't do any less business in consequence. My assistants do not live on the premises. It can only be done by persuasion, and by example of myself and others, to close fearless of consequences. I wish earnestly to have a general earlier closing.

Thomas Robert F., Caledonian Road, Kings Cross, age 39, oil and colourman. Causes: a certain number of people putting off shopping till the last moment, and shopkeeper being foolish enough to oblige them, consequently a continued life of slavery to master and man. The whole body of shopkeepers should agree to close at an earlier hour. Decidedly, business could be done easily in quite two hours less. I suffer from weariness, exhaustion, and often too tired to enjoy the rest of bed and Sabbath. The holiday broke down through only a few responding to it, and therefore a fall off in their trade on the one particular evening. I think half-past eight o'clock five days, and ten o'clock on Saturdays, would do very well.

A. J. P., Deptford, age 41, grocer and cheesemonger. Long hours are caused by want of agreement to close early, between different trades. As many middle sized shops are kept open late, on account of chandler shops in the vicinity being open late, remedy is not likely to be found, until the main business is conducted by large firms who can be independent. I have felt the ill effects, although I have opportunity of relief and change when needed. Want of independent spirit on the part of the principal traders, is the cause of the half-holiday breaking down. My assistants have suffered, and none but exceptionally strong and healthy men can endure the work.

Robert George B., cheesemonger, Lower Marsh, Lambeth. The thoughtless habit and indifference of the public leads to late shopping, and thus to long hours. I think the only remedy will be a legislative one, but I do not see how that is to be effected, except by placing shops under some such regulation as factories. No doubt business could be generally done in eight hours, but ten to twelve hours would be amply sufficient. I often feel the ill effects of the long hours, especially on Sundays, after the Saturday's continuous and exhaustive work (sixteen and a half hours). Want of union among the employers is the cause of late hours, and some covetousness as well. The business could be done by seven on five week days, and ten on Saturdays. I believe that some of my young men have suffered and been ill. I should have great pleasure in closing earlier, it would benefit both them and myself.



Persuasion has been tried many times without effect ; the public are too apathetic on the question.

Augustus S., Hackney Road, age 25, draper's shopwalker. In four places of business in London, and two in the country, varying from twelve months and upwards. I have always been in business at 8 in the morning, and left at from 9 to 10 through the week, and from 9 till 12 on Saturday ; but holding a position I now commence business at 9 and leave at 9.30 through the week, and 11.30 on Saturdays. For meals we have half an hour for dinner, but only a quarter of an hour for breakfast and tea, which all reasonable persons must know is not sufficient. I am certainly not in good health, nor can any one with such hours of confinement as we get. On a Saturday night quite worn out. I do not live on the premises. There are twenty-five assistants, about ten under twenty, the rest above. I have noticed the ill effects of long hours in numberless cases ; a young man has just had to leave through long standing, and many others before him. The evening is the busiest, but if the shops were closed, three-fourths of the people who come at that time could and would come in the morning or afternoon if the shops were closed early. The cause is want of unity amongst employers, and nothing but legislation will improve it. The weekly holiday breaks down entirely through a few miserly individuals. I should be satisfied with twelve hours a day and a weekly holiday, and then in the morning we should feel fit to work, whereas now we feel too exhausted to perform our duties as they should be done, and I believe the majority of employers would be glad if such were the case, as it would be greatly to their benefit. The only people (or at least the majority of people) whom we have to serve late are those people who leave work at six in the evening and two on Saturdays, and who could make all their purchases before eight every day, and certainly before that time on Saturday ; also since the half-holiday has been started we work later other evenings than before, therefore we really get no benefit from it, and why should we slave day after day killing ourselves and ruining health, when there is not the slightest need for it. We are human, and subjects of a Christian country, and we ought to be protected ; and we look to our legislators and statesmen to give us that which is only ours by right, and which even the mechanic now gets and enjoys.

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THEIR "EXCELLENT" REASONS.

Do not let it be supposed that the obstructionists act thus without giving reasons. The question, however, is, are the



reasons given sufficient to justify the attitude they assume. Now I wish it to be distinctly understood that my criticisms are, for the most part, directed against the selfish minority already alluded to, and are in no way intended to offend the susceptibilities of the vast number of traders who have so generously identified themselves with the shop hours' movement. There are employers who do not fail to see that their interests are identical with those of the assistants, and who as well, are humane enough to make a sacrifice, if need be, for the benefit of those whom they know from hard practical experience have borne their grievances with patience and fortitude. Such men as these are heroes in the strife, and I would not willingly say a single word concerning them that might be construed unkindly. But on the other hand a sense of duty impels me to denounce hypocrisy wherever I find it, and to unmask those who are the dark movers behind these scenes of social oppression. The reasons adduced by those who compose the minority, for their attitude of opposition, are many and various. Chiefly they are:—that they consider the convenience of the public requires that shops should be kept open as long as there is a demand—that the assistants if released would waste their time, and are consequently better at work under control than free with a reasonable leisure—that because in their youth they were obliged to work from six in the morning until eleven or twelve every night, they can see no reason why assistants of the present day should have more leisure than they had—and, finally, they contend that the assistants are well off, and would visit music halls and public houses if they had their evenings to themselves. The first reason given in this excellent specimen of special pleading I have already dealt with, and the other two may speedily be disposed of if indeed there is any need to regard seriously arguments which on the face of them stand self-condemned. It is such scurrilous statements as these, made as they usually are by ignorant and ill-conditioned men, that create a spirit of animosity and set class against class. Their policy is to have a pound of flesh without even the semblance of justification or the candour displayed by Shylock, for they seek to shelter themselves by Pharisaic platitudes which, if anything, are mere shallow subterfuges. Such statements are nothing less than cruel slanders on the characters of a highly respectable, intelligent, and much oppressed body of young men and women. The assistants of this country may be trusted



to spend their time properly if they only have the same chances of leisure as other young men and women possess. But assuming they would not spend a well-earned leisure exactly to the liking of these gentry. Surely they are not slaves to be dealt with body and soul as their masters would. I imagine they could not, under any circumstances, do much worse than ruin their health, which assuredly they do now behind the counter.

Who are these persons that dictate to and tyrannise over young men probably more respectable than themselves? I venture to think that if we could look back a few years they might have been seen toiling wearily behind the counter themselves, and crying out with all their might against the long hours. But now the man is a master, and instead of his own bitter experiences softening his nature and creating a kindly feeling for those he employs, he has become more callous and exacting. His only aim is to fill the till, no matter how long his assistants have to work. If they fail in health he can soon discharge them and get others. Yet these are the men who pretend to be so solicitous for the welfare of their employés. They have the audacity to say that their assistants are better behind the counter breathing a vitiated air, and almost ready to sink from fatigue, than being out in the open air or resting to recruit their strength. I do not say that every young man and woman who would be liberated if the hours were shorter would spend their time in the best possible manner, yet I fully believe that the majority would eagerly seize the opportunity to do something healthy and useful. It seems a strange argument to use in these days to wish the many to suffer for the faults of a few. I do not desire to flatter assistants; but without doubt there are very many young men now behind the counter with exceptional abilities whose mental powers are stunted by this cruel system, and entirely lost to the country.

#### THE MORAL EFFECT OF LONG HOURS.

I could adduce the testimony of hundreds of ministers of religion and others to prove that shop assistants do not avail themselves of the educational advantages which are enjoyed by other classes, simply because they are precluded from doing so by their long hours. I will merely give the experiences of



two or three ministers, as space will not permit me here to give more :—

Archdeacon Farrar, Westminster Abbey, says :—“A large number of shopkeepers and assistants are overworked, and should have the help of every thinking man and woman to reduce their hours of labour. Happily, this is not a question which creates any division between class and class, but the fact remains that many of those occupied in shops work for twelve, fourteen, and sixteen hours a day, and I declare, in the name of common justice and common humanity, that it is not right or fair that such a strain should be put upon them. In every free country the weak have a right to appeal for protection to the Government and the Legislature, and we have again and again in England interfered between the oppressed and the oppressor, and endeavoured to right wrongs that were universally admitted. The cry of the slaves in the West Indies, of poor debtors, of factory hands, the canal boat population, climbing boys, little acrobats, and women used as draught beasts in coal mines, has not risen in vain for relief. The task is easier on this occasion, because there is no compact and determined resistance—the wishes of the employers go with the hopes of the employed. The weary shopman ought to be set free to ride upon his bicycle, to go to the gymnasium, or to a free library. I am convinced that all London would gain if the shop-assistants had greater opportunities of intellectual, moral, and spiritual improvement, and that not only London, but all England would gain, and the universal Church of Christ.”

Rev. S. G. Scott, the Rectory, Woolwich. In Battersea I noticed among assistants on all sides physical exhaustion, inertia and decay, mental stagnation, and stunting, moral cramping, and debasement. The narrow minded view of things for which the London Vestries are famous is not a little due to the absence of opportunity among shopmen for mental improvement and for widening their ideas of civil duty. As a rule they cannot attend a place of worship. When they did come they were prostrate, listless, and exhausted. My churchwardens who nobly did their duty on Sunday morning were often fearfully exhausted. In 1877 there joined my congregation at Battersea, a young man of great promise, high moral tone, and business vigour. He was then engaged in Tarn's, Kennington, where early hours and the Saturday half-holiday are observed. About 1880 he married and set up for himself in Battersea. He worked nobly, pushed an unpretentious but thriving business, but grew paler and paler, and at last in June 1883 died quite suddenly, an admitted victim to long late hours, vitiated atmosphere, and no fresh air or exercise. He was most steady and regular in his life and habits. Several young women who were cashiers in the closely confined ill-ventilated boxes suffered



very sadly. Late shopping fosters and is fostered by drinking. The many drink first and shop afterwards, to the detriment of their homes. Late gaslit shops render the pavements very attractive to loungers, who soon drift into drinking ways, the sauciness and immorality of the pavement among young girls, which is one of the black spots in our great towns, and pregnant with grave mischief for the future of our country, is in great degree aided by the present system.

Rev. W. Cuff, Shoreditch Tabernacle, Hackney Road, E. Many shop-assistants look pale, haggard, and overdone. They make one complaint as to mental culture. No time to read, and so worked we have no inclination. This of course makes some loose in morals, during the little time they are free. The mind not cultivated means all manner of bad habits, and this I think is the worst result of late hours in business. Some shopkeepers and assistants attend on a Sunday morning, but generally late, and then it is a great effort. I am sure the very large majority never enter a place of worship. We can't get teachers for our morning schools. They can't come to the week night meetings, lectures, &c. I have known many fail in health, through the long hours, and have given them hospital letters, and done what I could to get them other situations. I am strongly of opinion that there is no real need for the shops to be open so late as they are. I know the lives and habits of the masses thoroughly, as I have had twenty years' experience amongst them, and I am sure they could and would do their shopping early if the shops closed. I am decidedly of opinion that on the part of the people there is no need for late shopping, any more than there is for Sunday shopping, and of that there is none.

Rev. Henry D. Brown, Minister of Salem Baptist Church, 37 Bedford Terrace, Chesham Bury, Lancaster. I do not find either retail traders or assistants able to attend creditably Sunday morning services. When they do come, they are, as I have thought, excusably late. As a rule they are not found as teachers or scholars in morning schools. Shop assistants are quite unable to avail themselves of any education stimulus. Young men whom I have been most anxious to benefit by lectures, &c., have sorrowfully excused themselves on account of lengthened hours in their shops. My lectures would be near conclusion when the shutters were being put up. Evening classes are out of the question for shop assistants while hours are as at present arranged. On the 25th of September 1882 I lost one of my most devoted young men, a Thomas Rogers, who had been engaged as a light porter in one of the drapery houses of this town. Often did he express to me how hard he felt the long hours, and bearing upon his then already weakened constitution. After keeping him to the latest hour they



would make a practice of lading him with a number of parcels to deliver on his way home, which further lengthened his hours and completed his exhaustion. I saw increasing evidences of weakness — weakness accelerated by business hardships. One day while in the cellar lifting or removing boxes, he overstrained himself and burst a blood vessel, of which he died in a few days. His employers paid his funeral expenses. Another young man, a salesman in the same place, and an ardent Sunday-school teacher and most exemplary member of the church, complained bitterly of the long hours. He was enthusiastically active, consequently the consumption of nervous force must have been very great. He became ill at last—all traceable to overwork. He flung himself most daringly into this early closing movement; was elected chairman of the Committee, which ultimately carried, by public meeting, (when the Rev. Arthur Mursell of Birmingham gave a lecture), a resolution to close all shops every Tuesday at one o'clock. Although the town's people have not all kept loyally to the resolution, yet all drapers, tailors, shoemakers, &c., still keep their shops closed. Those who have broken through are chiefly bakers and druggists. This young man partially recovered, but at last left the town. His hours are now regulated on a reasonable scale. In letters I have received from him he mentions this fact with gratitude. There is no necessity at all for such late hours. If the shopkeepers would themselves combine to close early, the community would willingly acquiesce I am sure; and besides benefiting themselves, would morally influence the people who have contracted the evil habit of late shopping. In many cases this late shopping is traceable to the shopkeepers themselves, whose houses being known to be open until very late, the people do not bestir themselves, always feeling they can go at any time. I have however been told by grocers and some other shopkeepers that they have to keep open on account of the public-houses. Women have to wait—wearily wait—until their husbands come home from the public-house or late club, and bring some money wherewith they may run to the shop to buy necessaries, but this last objection does not apply to every night. Shopkeepers wrong themselves as well as their assistants. Besides the increased expense, gas, &c., the long confinement brings on various bodily ailments. Many physical and moral evils are the outcome of this system, and I have no doubt that life itself is shortened.

Rev. Arthur Mursell, Minister of Graham Street Church, Birmingham. I have many personal friends and acquaintances in wholesale warehouses and retail shops, whose constitutions have been entirely undermined by confinement and over-work. Many of them make a great, and more or less successful effort to attend lectures, &c.; but I feel it is unreasonable to expect them to attend with regularity. Libraries, lectures, and public educational agencies



are practically closed against them. I have known young people threatened with dismissal from large London houses, if they venture to sit down during business hours, although the room may have been quite free from customers at the time. The application of the Factories Act to large establishments would be a helpful remedy. There should be a determination to obtain Wednesday and Saturday (wherever practicable) as half-holidays, and to close retail shops at six or seven o'clock. It is terrible to think of the moral aspect of this social question. While public opinion delays to set our overtaxed *employés* free from their exorbitant confinement, they are devising nameless ways to emancipate themselves. What sentiment but sympathy and sorrow, without one grain of oburgation, can we feel for the daughter of some country home driven by reverse she had no hand in making, to seek a livelihood in the business of a great town, if, noting the daily fading of the roses which she brought from the dewy fields all blooming in her cheeks, she listens to the flattery which admires them and falls beneath the treachery which would pluck and blast them in their bloom? It is true now, that many of the hands that spread the silks and sarsnets on the counter are as deft at the touching of the keys as those of the fastidious purchasers whom it is so hard to please, and who take so long to pay. It is not a reverse of fortune which can unmake the lady, or a place behind the counter which can unfrock the gentleman; and there are serving in our British shops to-day those who by birth, character, fine-feeling, education, and all that lends a sterling ring to social currency, are as worthy of either name as may be found amongst the shorter wits and longer purses, who, with an oath and a silver spoon in the mouth, pretend to higher things. At least there is this much to be said for the hardest and most burdened toilers whose hearts and limbs are aching day by day in the cruel slave-market of our modern nineteenth century shop: they are enlisted in a nobler, a more chivalrous, and more enviable course than those who, either as the victims of match-making duennas, or on their own account, speculate in the beauty-broking which is rife on the heartless Exchange of society. Better sell yourself to toil than treason; to slavery than sin. I'd rather be the oppressed than the oppressor; I'd rather be the dupe than the deceiver; I'd rather be the toiler than the tyrant. If there is retribution fierce and fearful certain to come one day upon any human crime it is upon the crimes of selfishness and tyranny. The hectic flush which comes of overtoil is seen, and burns again on angel cheeks; the dry, hard cough; the deep-drawn sigh; they are heard in heaven, and the binders of the burdens are marked out for the lash. It is not the weaklings who go under in the struggle, and on whom society sets down the trample of its dainty foot; it is not these to whom the reckoning comes. It is not the hunted who are driven to suicide and sin, but the hunters who have driven and



oppressed them, on whose track the sleuth-hound, Nemesis, will hang. Society is harsh in judgment, and partial in its awards. It is hard on poverty's transgression, but lenient to luxury's lapse. The tragedy of street shame is revolting, but the revelries of the Regency are chivalrous. But there is One ear in which the eloquence of temptation is pathetic, and the prone outcast, driven by selfish cruelty to sin, shall find a lighter verdict from Him who scowled upon the pelters of the sinner than the professional betrayer, fickle as frail and false as selfish. It is the spider who shall be crushed; but the fly shall find its wings again when the web is broken. O, it is a true, true Scripture, "When He maketh inquisition for blood He forgetteth not the cry of the humble." But, ye who toil at drudgery, however hard, remember it is an honourable soldiery. And let the world say what it will, let society sneer as it may, and dandyism curl its lip in all the inanities of paltry scorn, stand firm in the nobler pride of manhood and of womanhood, with the unfaltering prayer, "Lead me not into temptation." And if selfish men will not lighten your labour upon earth, a loving God shall give you rest in heaven.

"Toil on, toil on, from morn till eve,  
Thro' night and noon and daytime,  
Till broken health shall pluck your sleeve,  
And Death proclaim it paytime."

Rev. Charles L. Marson, 48 Great Prescott Street, Whitechapel, E., St Jude's, Whitechapel. I consider the long hours and the perpetual standing to cause a general debility, to induce diseases, such as rupture in the men, and a number of feminine diseases in the women, and spinal disorders. I consider that any intellectual life is impossible, as rest and freedom from physical prostration are *sine qua nons* for mental effort. I am of opinion that great exhaustion tends to exciting pleasures, and so to immorality in those who suffer from it. I have noticed that many shop assistants have not a high moral standard. They stay in bed usually on a Sunday morning I find, and I applaud them for it, except in the case of the assistants in large and well-managed houses. The long hours on Saturday, which disease and kill assistants that the capitalist may fatten, are a scandal to our Christianity and civilisation, and an additional evidence, if one was needed, how thoroughly the worship of mammon has supplanted that of Christ. The University Extension Society holds classes at 8, when all the shops about are usually still open; if not, the assistants are too tired to attend. To pass over cases of disease I have met with—women whose health or morals have given way under the severe strain—I would point out this, that in a society where honest and hard-working men grow grey from boyhood and are neither able to marry nor have a home of their own, nor to influence their country's laws, nor to cultivate the talents and faculties which



make us men, there is something radically wrong, and the widest questions of social reform are thrown open. There is but one remedy for this as for other social evils, to protect the weak from the oppressor, and to free the slaves of a system by using the great organisation or union we call a State. An extension of the Factory Acts would do something. But above all, a manly spirit of self-sacrifice and brotherhood, which is the essence of genuine Christianity.

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We require all the brain-power we can get in the Arts, Sciences, Literature—and, indeed, every leading department of life; and it is bad policy, to say the least, to allow such a numerous class of highly intelligent young men to be so handicapped in the race of life as to have any talents they may possess completely neutralised and rendered absolutely useless to themselves and their fellow-creatures. As a rule, the more people are trusted the keener is their sense of duty, the more fully do they realise their responsibilities and the more worthy of confidence do they show themselves. But if the amiable gentlemen of the minority are driven from one point they seize another. “Why should the assistants of this day be better off than we were twenty years ago? The hours were quite as long for us.” And then they inflate themselves with their own conceit, and endeavour to assume an attitude of injured dignity and innocence. I do not doubt that there are many men who have passed through a long and trying period of shop labour in all its stages, and eventually succeeded in business, but I am very much deceived if such men are as well, as useful, and are likely to live as long as they might have done if they had been blessed with opportunities, well used, of mental and physical improvement. I have heard it said by many practical and thinking men that shopkeepers and assistants are not long livers, and, indeed, the percentage of elderly men in shops is very small. Where all the young men and women go to, or what they develop into, I know not, unless they fill premature graves, as undoubtedly thousands do, or lead obscure and useless lives in the discharge of duties which do not call for much bodily strength, for that is assuredly nearly all consumed by the long weary days of their youth spent behind the counter. Such arguments as these involve their own refutation; and I shall not trouble to deal with them at greater length, because all they amount



to, when properly interpreted, is a desire to prolong the system for the promotion of selfish interests. No moral, intellectual, or social wants enter into the calculations of the selfish shopkeeper. His magnet of attraction is the till, and how to fill it. But if the minority would pause a while and weigh both sides of the question, they would speedily discover that they are the victims of their own delusions. A thrifty shopkeeper generally sticks to the counter; and if long hours are injurious to assistants they are equally injurious to the masters. The question should therefore arise, whether, under the circumstances, the long hours pay for the gas and waste of physical energy, more especially when the fact is apparent that the general consumption or demand is not increased by the shop being open so long. Common prudence would seem to dictate a reversal of the present short-sighted policy which always has prevented, and, I am afraid, always will prevent the general adoption of early closing by voluntary or persuasive means.

#### LEGISLATION THE ONLY REMEDY.

The repeated trials and failures of innumerable voluntary efforts have not unnaturally well-nigh exhausted the patience and perseverance of all shopkeepers and assistants who are anxious to have a change. No class could have exercised greater forbearance or self-control under so many combined disadvantages. Violence or intimidation in any shape or form has been condemned by the good sense of all concerned. But it is utterly beyond reason to suppose that the present system can be allowed to go on for ever without being checked. Hence the shopkeepers and assistants composing the Shop Hours Labour League have resolved, as all other allowable and legal means have failed, to seek at once an Act of Parliament, and in default to apply for the appointment of a Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry to investigate the causes, and ascertain the effects of the long hours of labour in shops and similar places, on the health of those who endure them and the nation at large, with a view to the enactment of such a remedial measure as may be found necessary to protect the bodily strength of those who are absolutely unable to protect themselves. It is an old saying that necessity is the mother of invention, and it is in no way surprising that even their great and pressing necessities should have urged those



concerned to—I will not say discover, but seek at last the only remedy by which they can be relieved. It is of course said by some that in these days we are too eager to apply to the House of Commons for assistance in cases in which the parties affected might remove the evils by their own exertions. Everybody, they contend, rushes to Parliament to have their grievances redressed, thereby creating an insatiable demand for legislation. Now there can be no doubt that over-legislation should be avoided, and that the people should be taught to rely upon themselves as much as possible; but this can only be done where they are free agents and are capable of protecting themselves. I am prepared to admit that if any section of the community has the power to remedy an evil, and does not for any reason exercise that power, but chooses instead to apply for State aid, Parliament cannot be expected to interfere. The case I am now dealing with does not come under this category. The shop assistants are absolutely powerless to protect themselves. It is admitted by everyone at all acquainted with the circumstances that persuasion has failed, and those who disapprove of legislation can only suggest, as a last resort, that shop assistants should form themselves into a strong Trades Union, thus following the example set by mechanics and artizans, who have shortened their hours and raised their wages by combination and self-denial.

#### DIFFICULTIES OF COMBINATION.

Now the Shop Hours Labour League does not profess to deal with pecuniary considerations. Its aim is purely humanitarian; and so far as Trades Unionism or combination is concerned, the circumstances surrounding shop labour are such as to render it almost, if not absolutely, impossible to shorten the hours by any such means. I am of course met with the question that if other classes have been successful, why should not shop assistants be equally so? I cannot deny the success of other classes, and the greatest credit is due to them for having asserted their natural rights in the face of so much wealth, influence, and opposition. But the cost of the struggle has been great to both employers and employed, and I cannot help thinking that it might have been better if the State, or some neutral authority could have interposed and laid down the same rule which had eventually to be settled by force. Strikes with all



their distressing incidents might thus have been avoided. Capital and labour might have been on more friendly terms, and a vast volume of trade that left the country might have enriched the combatants. But it had not to be. The passions and selfishness of men were allowed free scope. Eventually, however, labour won, and the working hours of artizans were reduced within reasonable limits. Even if such results might be obtained by similar means, I should hesitate before advising their adoption in the case of shop-assistants who are minors, not because I do not think they were justifiable in the case alluded to, but because it is more consonant with the principles of good government that reason and equitable principles should be applied on behalf of the community by an impartial authority before force in any shape or form is resorted to. War between capital and labour, should be a last resort. They are twin sisters, and properly understood, their interests are identical. They are indispensable to each other, but of the two, labour is the greater and more independent as being the very source and foundation of wealth and power. If these views were recognised and enforced in the interests of the State, trade feuds of a national character might be avoided, and whatever may be urged to the contrary, I hold that no government can be better employed than by levelling unnatural inequalities and guarding the very fountain of strength and greatness.

Material wealth has its rights which must also be zealously guarded, but the human body with its labour is peculiarly entitled to the guardianship of the State. I therefore contend that even if combinations and strikes could accomplish a shortening of the hours of labour of shop-assistants, it would be sounder policy for the State to prevent the adoption of that description of social war by enforcing the principles of justice and humanity in the interests of the nation, for it concerns the best interests of the commonwealth that men and women should not be allowed to wither and decay, mentally and physically, as a result of a vicious and preventable system. But in this case effectual combination is almost, if not, impossible. I admit that adult shop-assistants might form a trades union on the same plan as that adopted by artizans, but their chances of success would be very small. And so far as the great body of assistants are concerned, the fact that they are apprentices and young persons of both sexes, between the ages



of thirteen and twenty-one years, is alone sufficient to prove their inability to combine. Their youth, inexperience, small means, the keenness of the competition, and the control of their employers place all the minors within the almost complete power of this tyrannical system. How can young apprentices combine, and where is the money to come from to help any union or support strikes? Artizans, as a rule, are independent so long as they are fairly well skilled in their particular callings, but an assistant must take the greatest care not in any way to displease his employer or he will be discharged without a character. No matter how perfectly the duties of his calling may have been performed the master can refuse to give a character, and thousands do refuse, merely to show their petty authority, for the purpose of resenting some act not at all connected with the trading ability of the assistant. For instance, several cases have been brought under my notice in which assistants have been dismissed without a character for becoming members of an early closing association. Others have been ordered not to take a certain paper because it denounced the long hours and those who kept open late; and hundreds of cases have come to my knowledge in which assistants of both sexes have declared that they dare not on any account let their employers know that they had attended an early closing meeting. What are they to do? Young persons on the threshold of life do not wish to endanger their future prospects by incurring the displeasure of their employers, and if they do happen to show a little manly or womanly courage they will in all probability have to confront the world without a character, and may never in the face of such keen competition obtain another situation, through no want of ability but simply for endeavouring to assert their natural rights. It is high time the law as to character was altered, for if a man or a woman has a good reputation it should not be within the power of any employer to destroy it, or to take the bread out of anyone's mouth by simply declining to tell the truth. The fear inspired by this system completely damps the independence of assistants, and makes them mere instruments in the hands of selfish and tyrannical employers.

Assuming, however, that these obstacles to combination did not exist, and that every assistant turned out on strike tomorrow, the number out of employment is so great and their



wants so pressing that the most powerful Trades' Union could not prevent them from filling at once the places vacated by the strikers. The large body of assistants are then in this position. They have selected an avocation which is over stocked, and which however unpleasant they cannot leave. They must therefore either accept the long hours or be thrown on the world without employment, which means poverty and perhaps starvation. It is all very well to say that they can take up with something else in which the hours are shorter, but the unpleasant circumstances of their calling are not fully realised during minority, and how is it possible after reaching maturity, and after having served an apprenticeship to learn another trade? In the majority of cases they must stick to the counter if it kills them. And why? Simply because they are entangled in a network of circumstance from which extrication is almost impossible. They are in fact not free agents, but the involuntary victims of a cruel system, simply unable by any means to protect themselves. Surely in these circumstances the outraged rights of humanity should be vindicated by a judicious State interference. Then of course comes the difficulty of framing a law to remedy the evils, whilst having a due regard to the rights of those who might be injuriously affected by any change. My only aim is to reduce the hours within reasonable limits, and any scheme that accomplishes this will be acceptable to me. Several schemes have been suggested, but it may be as well to give an outline of the most practicable.

#### SUGGESTED REMEDIES.

The hours of shop labour generally might be limited by law to sixty per week—or two hours daily might be allowed for meals and exercise, with a fixed weekly half-holiday—or all shops might be compulsorily closed at six or seven on five days of the week, and at eight or nine on a Saturday. The first of these suggestions strikes at the principle of non-interference with adult labour. I am not prepared to say that I approve of interfering with adult labour where no other or higher than commercial considerations are involved, but in the case of adult shop assistants it seems to me that their labour might be limited by law, as an exception to the principle, because a small minority are so mixed up with a majority of minors that if we legislate for one it seems we ought do so for



the other. I take it that no objection can possibly be urged against limiting the hours of labour of all shop assistants below the age of twenty-one. Sixty hours of labour a week is acknowledged by the medical profession to be sufficient to exhaust the energies of even adults having a due regard to the maintenance of health. But young growing boys and girls should on no account be subjected to seventy and eighty hours' toil at the very time when their constitutions are immature and undeveloped. Arguments are not necessary to prove this. Assuming, however, that all the minors were turned out of the shops by an Act of Parliament at a fixed hour every day, what would be the state of affairs? It is evident that the shops would either have to be closed or the adults would have to do all the work. Seeing that from one-half to two-thirds of the assistants would thus be liberated, it seems to me that it would be impossible to keep the shops open, with any prospect of doing business properly, afterwards. The probability, therefore, is that an Act to limit the hours of minors would create such a revolution in shop management that employers would find it absolutely necessary to close up at the time the minors were obliged to leave. If this were so, it may be asked why there should be any interference with adults. Because it is said that employers might discourage the employment of young men and women under twenty-one, in order to fill their shops with adults who could thus work any number of hours without restriction. If such a result followed, although it is extremely improbable, minors would to a certain extent be prejudiced by being shut out from an extensive field of labour. Adults, however, would be in greater request, and their labour would be more valuable, whilst there would be a greater supply of young persons for other and healthier callings, for under such altered circumstances employers might have fewer minors than they have at present, although it would be impossible for them to do without apprentices and young persons to learn the trade. The probabilities, however, are that shops would be closed at the time the minors left, and that the employers would act upon the recognised fact that there is no public or private necessity for them to keep open so long as they do now. It seems to me that, properly speaking, the assistants should be classed together,—male and female,—minors and adults,—so that they all might have a reasonable leisure, as whether an assistant be nineteen or twenty-three—health in



either case is of paramount importance—and at either age, as I have already shown, he is equally powerless to obtain reasonable hours. As an act of justice, therefore, to the minors, and as a protection to the adults, they should if possible all be under one regulation.

Some philanthropists, however, decry any interference with young men as well as adults, but strongly urge legislative protection for females. I cannot approve of such a plan. If we legislate for females alone, we handicap their labour and place them at a serious disadvantage when competing with men. Females are already sufficiently oppressed by being, in the majority of instances, ground down to work almost for nothing, and if an Act of Parliament were passed to limit their hours alone, it might mean protection to a few, but it would mean starvation to many and exclusion to all from a field of labour for which they are peculiarly adapted. Wages in shops are already very low, and there is no reason to believe that they would be higher if the labour of females was protected by law; but one effect of legal protection for females only would unquestionably be a decrease in the demand for their labour and a corresponding increase in the demand for male labour. Any measure, therefore, which creates unnatural inequalities of this description cannot be supported, for women have a perfect right to be placed on equal terms with men in the competition of life, as if from causes, over which they have no control, they are obliged to earn their living, instead of being supported by others, it is their misfortune and no impediments should be placed in their way. On the contrary, we should hold out the hand of sympathy and aid them to an honourable competency in their, at least, unequal contest with men. The limitation of the hours generally might of course affect the interests of a minority of traders who would have to employ extra hands if they were desirous of keeping open after their assistants had left, but this is only what has to be done in other businesses. If long hours are worked, payment for overtime follows, and if shopkeepers choose to keep their establishments open an unreasonable number of hours, they should at all events liberate their assistants to enable them to attend to their health. If the hours were reduced to sixty per week the shopkeeper could still keep open all night if he thought proper, the only difference would be that he would have to employ two sets or relays of hands, a day set and a night set. There would be



no difficulty in getting them, but he would have to choose between closing at the time the assistants left and keeping open afterwards with the cost of employing extra hands. The probability is he would close and leave business like a sensible man with the assistants.

The second suggestion is that two hours daily should be given for meals and rest, and that there should be a regular weekly half holiday. This may commend itself to a good many persons. I have shown that the inadequate and irregular time allowed for meals is one of the most serious evils connected with shop labour, but this plan would give two hours during the day for rest and refreshment and a weekly half holiday into the bargain. I see no good reason why shop assistants should not have a regular and fixed time for meals as well as those who come under the operation of the Factory Acts. Their hours are longer, they need regularity and rest for meals more than artizans do, and yet they are harassed and hurried over nearly every meal they have. The mechanic has his dinner hour kept sacred, and everybody knows that it is very little use to go to works or factories during the dinner hour. The Factory Act provides that the toiler *shall* have time for rest and refreshment, and why should not the shop assistant be benefited by an extension of the same law? If it were known that no business would be done in shops between twelve and one o'clock, people would take good care not to go during that time, but now they go at any time and the health of the assistants is sacrificed as a consequence. Even the machinery in factories is stopped during meal times, but in shops the human machines never cease from morning to night. Breakfast, dinner, and tea are hurried over as quickly as possible to get back to the counter. Now, however convenient this may be to the purchaser or profitable to the employer, it is not fair to the assistants. I freely admit that a system by which assistants should have a fixed time absolutely to themselves would alter present arrangements and upset preconceived notions, but I have nothing to do with that. The health of the assistants is of more importance than the stability of any antiquated system, which is merely beneficial to the employer, and is not called for by any public or private necessity. Meal times should be reasonable and kept sacred from interference by anyone. But how is it to be done? By relays, or sending so many at a time, if you will,



or by a suspension of business during the time, as in factories. It may seem an extraordinary innovation to suspend cutting silk and calico and to stop weighing sugar, but is it any more extraordinary than to stop the huge engines and complex machinery by which the silks, calicos, and sugars are made? If the manufacturer—the producer of wealth—is obliged to shut off the steam two or three times a day, why should the distributor,—the simple server out,—who produces no wealth, be obliged to go on and on without a rest. There is no good reason why he should. It simply means that a purchaser who does not like to be disturbed at meal times must recognise the right of others not to be disturbed. Life is made up of mutual concessions, and no thinking person will ever regard it as an injury to be obliged to study the natural wants of others. Although an entire suspension of business during meal times is to my mind possible, yet it may not be so practicable as keeping the business going all the day and allowing the assistants to take their rest and refreshment in turns of so many at a time. If, for instance, there are twenty-five assistants in the shop, they should be released, twelve on the first sitting and the other thirteen on their return. They should have at the very least half-an-hour each without interference if they live on the premises, and if they live off they should have one hour for dinner. There would, it is true, be fewer hands for an hour or an hour and a half, and the business would go on without stoppage, but I am of opinion that when once the meal times became known, there would not be many customers found with bad taste enough to invade them. Under the present system, arrangements of a similar kind have to be made to enable the assistants to get to their meals for even fifteen or twenty minutes, and it would surely be very simple to extend the same usage to enable the assistants in batches to have a fixed reasonable time absolutely to themselves. A complete cessation from standing, and, if possible, a breath of fresh air in the middle of the day, would be an inestimable boon to the assistants. It would break the monotony and make their work more of a pleasure than as it is now—a severe imposition.

Almost every class has a weekly half-holiday or short day, why should shop assistants be deprived of the same privilege? There is no good reason against it. The half-holiday might be had in two ways, either by closing the shops at an early



hour on a fixed uniform day, or by allowing the assistants to take the half-holiday in batches on different days. There seems to me to be no insurmountable difficulty in closing all shops at a given hour, say two o'clock on a certain day; but I am convinced the majority of shops could not close on a Saturday afternoon, as on that day the great wage-earning classes both receive and spend their money. The fashionable shops of course close on a Saturday afternoon, but the others could not under any circumstances do so. It would not, however, do for some shops to close one day, and others on another day, for, as already explained, there must be unanimity and uniformity, otherwise the conditions are unequal and the competition unfair. It would not suit Pimlico, for instance, to close on a Thursday if Chelsea refused to close on the same day, and closed on a Wednesday. There would be no guarantee that the purchasers would not go from one place to the other. In London, I take it, the half-holiday might very well be general and uniform on Wednesday or Thursday. But probably Monday or Tuesday would suit Liverpool, and Friday might suit Birmingham. If there was a legal regulation that shops should close one half day in every week, it would necessarily follow that each town or district would have to fix upon its own day, and stick to it when once decided upon. If, however, for any reason, the uniform weekly half-holiday closing was found to be impracticable, although I cannot for one moment see why it should, arrangements might be made to liberate the assistants in batches, so that the establishments if open should not be denuded of assistants. So many might be liberated one day, and so many another. Of course this or any other plan could scarcely be expected wholly to square with the views of all the employers, for however the hours are curtailed, some inconvenience, if not actual loss, must be incurred. The main point, however, to be borne in mind throughout, is the preservation of the health and strength of those whose only capital is their physical and mental powers.

The other plan suggested is that of closing shops at a fixed and reasonable time by an Act of Parliament. The bare suggestion of such a proceeding a short time ago was received with derision, and I must admit that to compel every shop-keeper to close up at a fixed time against his will seems on the face of it to be an unjustifiable interference with the liberty of the subject. There is a great deal to be said on



both sides. Why should not a man who pays rent, rates and taxes—and who is burdened with all the expenses and risks connected with business—keep his place of business open as long as he chooses? There is only one consideration that can possibly interfere with such a right, and that is the welfare of the community. I have already shewn the extent of the evils of long hours in shops, and assume that every reasonable person will agree with me in thinking that there should be a speedy remedy. But the question is, would this be the best way of meeting the difficulty? So far as consumption is concerned, shopkeepers could not suffer, as they are not producers but mere distributors, and all that is necessary is to shift the distribution from a late hour of the day to an earlier period. Retailers have a right to say to the purchasing public, “You must come at a reasonable time for your necessaries in order that we may have the same means of rest and relaxation as you enjoy.” There is no fault-finding with work, all that is needed is a readjustment to check a pernicious custom on the one hand, and to liberate jaded workers on the other. But the problem is how to do it. If shops were peremptorily closed at a fixed hour by a parliamentary regulation, the questions arise, “Are you going to close every small shop, whose only attendants are the family of the owner? If not, why should you close a larger shop, simply because there are a few assistants employed in it?” Would you preclude the small shopkeeper from using his labour, small capital, and talent to the best advantage? Assuming him to have low wages and a large family, he would be prevented from trading, even in a small way, to augment his income. This would be an evident injustice to a large body of small shopkeepers, without taking into consideration the alleged inconvenience which might result to those who avail themselves of small shops. Then if the large shops were to be closed and the small ones left open, a trading inequality would be created which would evidently be unjust, as the trade would thus be driven to the small shops, which would in time probably become large ones, and able to compete on equal terms with the largest. Legal regulations can only be efficacious if uniformly and impartially applied; and therefore if any such regulation were placed on the statute book, every shop and retail establishment, whether great or small, would have to be comprehended, so as to make all traders equal before the law. Then there would be



the different classes of trades to deal with. Many articles are perishable, and unless sold within a reasonable time might cause serious loss to the owners. Drapers might well close earlier than grocers ; grocers than bakers, and so we might go on arranging differences and distinctions without end, whereas in every retail establishment, no matter of what trade, assistants are confined an unreasonable number of hours. The main difficulty, however, to be overcome in adopting a regulation of the kind suggested is that of interfering with the trade, talent, and ability of the individual trader. A man has a right to buy and sell when and where he can, so long as the community does not suffer. If he chooses to keep open till twelve o'clock every night, Parliament has no right to interfere with him as an individual trader. But Parliament has an undoubted right to say that no individual shall prevent any other individual from having a reasonable time for rest and refreshment. Besides, vast numbers of assistants are kept at work even now after the doors are closed. The object to be attained is to release the assistants,—leaving perfect freedom of trade,—health and happiness being the only desiderata. Taking all the rights and interests of those immediately concerned into consideration, as well as the many practical difficulties to be overcome, I am of opinion that to close shops every day at a fixed hour by an Act of Parliament is not the best way of dealing with the difficulty, and at present I should not advise the Shop Hours Labour League to agitate for any such solution of the long hour system. The evils of such a course might be greater than those to be overcome. And so long as there is an immediate, an easier, and a more practicable way out of the difficulty there is no need to wait for a remedy fraught with delay and so many obstacles.

#### MY SUGGESTION—AN IMMEDIATE REMEDY.

It would, however, be idle to deny that many other suggestions have been made to me, all of which the sanguine authors believe to be capable of removing the evil and satisfying the bulk of those concerned. Many of the proposed panaceas are out of the question, and could not, for one moment, be entertained by practical men. The three with which I have just dealt are the most rational. But after a careful study of the whole question, I have come to the conclusion that the best



immediate remedy, under existing circumstances, would be a simple extension of "The Factory and Workshop Act," so that the same legal protection which now guards the health of factory operatives shall be applied to shop assistants. As matters now stand, the strange anomaly is presented of the Factory Inspector going up stairs to see that the milliner or dressmaker does not work too long, but in the same building he passes by the poor girl who stands behind the counter exhausted from the long standing. The law protects the woman who sits and makes the articles, but disregards the girl who has to stand and to use more bodily exertion and greater mental power. There may be a reason for this distinction, but I for one fail to see on what principle of justice or policy it is founded. Flesh and blood is surely the same in the work-room as it is in the shop. This is one of those curious inequalities which, I take it, arise more from inadvertence than intention. For what reason shop assistants were excluded from the beneficent operation of the Factory and Workshop Act I am at a loss to conceive. Now, however, that the omission has been pointed out, and the necessity for inclusion shown, I trust the Legislature will make amends by doing a simple act of justice, which will afford the same protection to shop assistants as it has given to factory and workshop operatives. To accomplish this purpose, I have framed the following:—

#### SHOP HOURS REGULATION BILL, OR THE FACTORY AND WORKSHOP ACT EXTENSION BILL.

*Preamble*—“WHEREAS the health of children, young persons, women and others employed in warehouses and shops is seriously injured by reason of not having sufficient time during working hours for meals and rest, and also because of the unreasonably long hours during which they are now obliged to work, it is expedient in the interests of the State to protect the health of the persons so employed, in a manner similar to that by which the health of those falling under the operation of the Factory and Workshop Act, 1878, is protected: Be it therefore enacted by the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords, Spiritual and Temporal, and the Commons, in



this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows :—

“ 1. This Act may be cited as ‘ The Shop Hours Regulation Act,’ or ‘ The Factory and Workshop Act (41 Vict. chap. 16) Extension Act.’

“ 2. This Act shall come into operation on the first day of January, one thousand eight hundred and eighty-five, which day is in this Act referred to as the commencement of this Act.

#### *Sanitary Provisions.*

“ 3. A warehouse or shop, and all the rooms therein occupied by assistants employed on the premises, shall be kept in a cleanly and healthy state, and free from effluvia arising from any drain, privy, or other nuisance, and shall be kept and ventilated to the satisfaction of the health officer of the district, in such a manner as to render harmless, so far as is practicable, all gases, dust, and other impurities produced in the course of or incident to the business carried on therein that may be injurious to health.

#### *Employment.*

“ 4. A child, young person, or adult person, shall not be employed in a warehouse or shop, except during the periods as hereinafter mentioned :—With respect to the employment of children :

“ (a) No child shall be employed under ten years of age ;

“ (b) No child shall be employed for a longer period than four hours and a half in any one day, which period shall be between 8 A.M. and 8 P.M.

#### *Education of Children.*

“ 5. Sections 23, 24, 25, and 26 of the Factory and Workshop Act, 1878, providing for the education of children shall apply to children employed in shops and warehouses.

[“ 23. The parent of a child employed in a warehouse or in a shop shall cause that child to attend some recognised efficient school (which school may be selected by such parent), as follows :

“ (1.) The child, when employed in a morning or afternoon set, shall in every week, during any part of which he is so employed, be caused to attend on each work day for at least one attendance ; and



“(2.) The child, when employed on the alternate day system, shall on each work day preceding each day of employment in the warehouse or shop be caused to attend for at least two attendances :

“(3.) An attendance for the purposes of this section shall be an attendance as defined for the time being by a Secretary of State with the consent of the Education Department, and be between the hours of eight in the morning and eight in the evening :

“Provided that—

“(a) A child shall not be required by this Act to attend school on Saturday or on any holiday or half-holiday allowed under this Act in the warehouse or shop in which the child is employed ; and

“(b) The non-attendance of the child shall be excused on every day on which he is certified by the teacher of the school to have been prevented from attending by sickness or other unavoidable cause, also when the school is closed during the ordinary holidays or for any other temporary cause ; and

“(c) Where there is not within the distance of two miles, measured according to the nearest road, from the residence of the child a recognised efficient school which the child can attend, attendance at a school temporarily approved in writing by an inspector under this Act, although not a recognised efficient school, shall for the purposes of this Act be deemed attendance at a recognised efficient school until such recognised efficient school as aforesaid is established, and with a view to such establishment the inspector shall immediately report to the Education Department every case of the approval of a school by him under this section.

“A child who has not in any week attended school for all the attendances required by this section shall not be employed in the following week until he has attended school for the deficient number of attendances.

“The Education Department shall from time to time, by the publication of lists or by notices or otherwise as they think expedient, provide for giving to all persons interested information of the schools in each school district which are recognised efficient schools.

“24. The occupier of a warehouse or shop in which a child is employed shall on Monday in every week (after the first week in which such child began to work therein), or on some other day appointed for that purpose by an inspector, obtain from the teacher of the recognised efficient school attended by the child, a certificate (according to the prescribed form and directions) respecting the attendance of such child at school in accordance with this Act.



“ ‘The employment of a child without obtaining such certificate as is required by this section shall be deemed to be employment of a child contrary to the provisions of this Act.

“ ‘The occupier shall keep every such certificate for two months after the date thereof, if the child so long continues to be employed in his warehouse or his shop, and shall produce the same to an inspector when required during that period.

“ ‘25. The board authority or persons who manage a recognised efficient school attended by a child employed in a warehouse or shop, or some person authorised by such board authority or person, may apply in writing to the occupier of the warehouse or shop to pay a weekly sum specified in the application, not exceeding threepence and not exceeding one-twelfth part of the wages of the child, and after that application the occupier, so long as he employs the child, shall be liable to pay to the applicants, while the child attends their school, the said weekly sum, and the sum may be recovered as a debt, and the occupier may deduct the sum so paid by him from the wages payable for the services of the child.

“ ‘26. When a child of the age of thirteen years has obtained from a person authorised by the Education Department a certificate of having attained such standard of proficiency in reading, writing, and arithmetic, or such standard of previous due attendance at a certified efficient school, as herein-after mentioned, that child shall be deemed to be a young person for the purposes of this Act.

“ ‘The standards of proficiency and due attendance for the purposes of this section shall be such as may be from time to time fixed for the purposes of this Act by a Secretary of State, with the consent of the Education Department, and the standards so fixed shall be published in the London Gazette, and shall not have effect until the expiration of at least six months after such publication.

“ ‘Attendance at a certified day industrial school shall be deemed for the purposes of this section to be attendance at a certified efficient school.’]

“ 6. With respect to the employment of young persons :

“ No young person shall be employed for a longer period than twelve hours (including meal times) in any one day, which period shall be between the hours of 6 A.M. and 8 P.M. on five days of the week, and between the hours of 6 A.M. and 10 P.M. on one day of the week.

“ 7. On one day in every week the period of employment for young persons and adults shall not be more than seven hours, such period to be between the hours of 6 A.M. and 5 P.M.



*Meals and Absence from Work.*

“ 8. There shall be allowed for meals and absence from work during the said periods of employment, with respect to young persons and adults, on every day except that on which the half-holiday is fixed, not less than one hour and a half, of which one hour at the least must be before three o'clock in the afternoon, and on the day fixed for the half-holiday not less than one hour.

“ 9. No child, young person or woman shall be employed continuously for more than four and a half hours without an interval of at least half an hour for a meal or absence from work.

“ 10. No child or young person shall be employed in a warehouse or shop on a Sunday.

*Application of the Act.*

“ 11. This Act shall apply to every shop and warehouse in which one or more assistants are employed (except as herein provided) in every city, town, or place in England and Wales having a population exceeding 20,000 persons, according to the last published Census.

*Administration of the Act.*

“ 12. This Act shall be administered by Inspectors appointed in pursuance of section 67 of the Factory and Workshop Act, 1878, under the control of a Secretary of State from time to time with the approval of the Treasury.

“ 13. An Inspector under the Factory and Workshop Act, 1878, shall, for the purpose of the execution of this Act, have power to do all or any of the following things, namely:—

“(a) To enter, inspect, and examine any shop or warehouse to which this Act applies, at any time, if he has reasonable cause to believe that any person is employed therein contrary to the provisions of this Act, and to enter at any time during the working day; and

“(b) To require the production of the registers, notices, and documents kept in pursuance of this Act, and to examine, inspect, and copy the same; and

“(c.) To make such examination and inquiry as may be necessary to ascertain whether the enactments for the



time being in force relating to public health and the enactments of this Act are complied with, so far as respects the shop or warehouse, or the persons employed therein; and

- “(d) To examine, either alone or in the presence of any other person, as he thinks fit, with respect to matters under this Act, every person whom he finds in a shop or warehouse, or whom he has reasonable cause to believe to be, or to have been within the preceding two months, employed in a shop or warehouse, and to require such person to be so examined, and to sign a declaration of the truth of the matters respecting which he or she is so examined; and
- “(e) To exercise such other powers as may be necessary for carrying this Act into effect.

*Notice.*

“14. Every person shall, within one month after he begins to occupy a shop or warehouse falling within the provisions of this Act, serve on an Inspector a written notice containing the name of the shop or warehouse, the place where it is situated, the address to which he desires his letters to be sent, the nature of the business or work, and the name of the firm under which the business is to be carried on, and in default shall be liable to a fine not exceeding five pounds.

“15. Where an Inspector, by writing, names a public clock or some other clock open to public view, for the purpose of regulating the period of employment in a shop or warehouse, all the periods necessary to be observed under this Act shall be regulated by that clock, which shall be specified in the notice affixed in the shop or warehouse.

*Registers.*

“16. There shall be affixed in a conspicuous part of every shop and warehouse in every town or city in England with a population exceeding 20,000 persons, a register in the prescribed form, stating the ages of the children and young persons employed, the hours of their attendance, the clock for the regulation of the employment, the name and the address of the Inspector to whom complaints may be made, and an abstract of this Act, and in default shall be liable to a fine not exceeding five pounds.



*Fines.*

“17. Every occupier of a shop or warehouse who does not conform with the provisions of the Act, shall be liable to a fine—

“(a) Of ten pounds for keeping his premises in an insanitary condition ;

“(b) Of five pounds for employing children and young persons beyond the time allowed ;

“(c) Of five pounds for depriving any assistant of the weekly half-holiday ;

“(d) Of three pounds for depriving any employé of the time allowed by this Act for meals and rest ;

“(e) Of ten pounds for employing a child or young person on a Sunday.

*Legal Proceedings.*

“18. All legal proceedings shall be taken under sections 89, 90, 91, and 92 of the Factory and Workshop Act, 1878.

*Definitions.*

“19. The expression ‘Shop’ in this Act means any premises wherein or within the close or curtilage of which the public have a right to enter for the purchase, the hire, or pledge of any article whatever, excepting only public-houses and refreshment-houses.

“20. The expression ‘Warehouse’ means any premises wherein or within the close or curtilage of which any articles are received or stored for distribution wholesale to retail traders.

“21. The expression ‘Child’ means a person above ten and under the age of thirteen years.

“22. The expression ‘Young person’ means a person of the age of thirteen years and under the age of eighteen years.

“23. The expression ‘Adult’ means a person of the age of eighteen years and upwards.

“24. The expression ‘Person’ means a person of either sex, unless the contrary is specified.

“25. Where the male sex is expressed it includes the female sex, unless the contrary is specified.



*Overtime.*

“26. The regulations of this Act shall not prevent any occupier from employing young persons for five hours per week longer than the periods herein specified during a well-known busy season, providing an application be made to the Inspector for the district, who must be satisfied of the necessity thereof before giving permission, but no such permission shall exceed one month in any one year.

“27. Children above twelve years of age may be employed on Saturdays, or on public market-days, for a period of ten hours, with the restrictions in this Act contained as to meals, and providing that no child shall be employed later than 10 P.M.

*Information.*

“28. Any occupier of or person employed in a shop or warehouse whom for any reason the Inspector desires to converse with respecting the provisions of this Act, shall have the right to claim to be heard in private, and to have all communications, written or verbal, concerning this Act regarded as privileged, if a request to that effect be made at the time.

“29. If any occupier of a shop or warehouse maliciously discharges or intimidates any person employed under this Act, by reason of having given information of the infringement of any of its provisions, he shall be liable to a fine of five pounds.

“30. If any person gives to any Inspector information purporting to be true concerning the violation of this Act, but which is wilfully and maliciously false, such person shall be liable to a fine of five pounds.

*Character.*

“31. Every person employed in a shop or warehouse shall, on leaving, or being dismissed therefrom, be entitled to demand from his employer a written statement containing a true and honest description of character for business ability and general conduct; and any employer refusing to give a character, or who knowingly makes an untrue statement therein, or suppresses the truth as to ability and conduct, shall be liable to a fine of five pounds.”



## PROBABLE EFFECT OF SUCH A MEASURE.

If such a measure as this becomes law, the harsh conditions surrounding the labour of the majority of shop assistants will be considerably alleviated, although not altogether removed. The effect, of course, cannot be foretold ; but if the results of the operation of The Factory and Workshop Act may be taken as a guide, a general improvement in the health of assistants should be immediately produced. The effect on the demand for the labour of young persons under eighteen years of age would not, I take it, be detrimental to their interests. A retail trader cannot possibly do without a regular supply of apprentices. Young persons are not able to wait until they are in their nineteenth year before seeking an avocation, and those who had already selected one would not be tempted to leave it to enter a shop. Pecuniary considerations would also deter shopkeepers from discouraging the employment of minors. A young man or young woman of nineteen requires a higher salary than boys and girls of fifteen, sixteen, and seventeen years of age, and to employ no one under eighteen would entail a considerable loss on the employer, besides cutting off the supply which feeds the whole system. There are, moreover, grades of work in all shops. The young apprentice begins with the very commonest task, and advances year after year until he becomes a competent shopman. When that stage is reached the employer cannot afford to let him do the work of an apprentice, neither would he submit to the indignity. Of course, there would have to be a slight re-arrangement, but that is an incident of all reforms. It was said that minors would be seriously prejudiced by the Factory and Workshop Act, but the fact is they are in greater demand than they were before it passed, and adults actually complain that too many apprentices are employed in factories and workshops. It therefore seems to me that similar results would follow an enactment of this description, and that adults, as well as minors, would be considerably benefitted without any risk of loss or disadvantage. I confess, however, that if there had been a probability of success, I should have made a more extensive demand. If this Bill came into operation to-morrow, much would remain to be done by the adults of both sexes. There



would still be a wide difference between the hours of artizans and those of shop assistants. I believe, however, that the example set by this piece of legislation, together with the impetus thus given to the early closing sentiment, would, in all probability, effect such a change as to render shop labour healthy and the hours more reasonable. The leading characteristics of the Bill are: sanitary inspection of shops—limited hours for young persons employed therein—regular meal times and periods of absence from work—a weekly half-holiday for all assistants—obligation on the part of employers to give a character.

The necessity of a reform embodying these provisions has, I take it, been already sufficiently demonstrated. It is, of course, well known that the sanitary arrangements in the majority of large establishments are of the most complete character. In fact, if I may judge from what some of the leading employers have shown and told me, the lot of the assistants in the fashionable and highly respectable localities is one to be envied by the majority of workers. They have well-stocked libraries and reading-rooms; swimming, music, cricket, football, and other clubs. Their hours are reasonable, and they have a weekly half-holiday. Their labour is not arduous, and the shops and warehouses are spacious, lofty, and well ventilated. What more can assistants reasonably desire? It is not, however, for such as these that State interference is necessary. There are vast numbers of establishments in London and the large provincial towns in which assistants, varying in number from two to fifty, are employed, where the bedrooms are small and crowded, where the lavatories with their drains and outlets are close to the shop or the bedrooms, where the gas is lighted several hours a day without any escape for the heated air,—where unpleasant odours, dust, and the breath of persons in varying states of health all combine to contaminate and consume what little pure air there is in the cooped-up shops with low ceilings and bad ventilation. These are the places that require the factory and sanitary inspector. Debility and disease are but the natural outcome of such circumstances. The assistants are simply poisoned; and after standing in places of this description,—heated, parched, and weary, is it surprising that when at last they are released at nine or ten at night many of them are tempted to quench their thirst and to drown their feelings with intoxicants? Such



a course, in my opinion, is unwise, but surrounded as they are by such unnatural conditions, even a temporary oblivion seems to afford relief. A craving of this kind, however, would be much less likely to occur if the hours were reasonable and the surroundings healthy.

As to limiting the hours of young persons of both sexes below the age of eighteen, to twelve a day, I take it there can be no objection to such a course founded on sense or reason. I have dealt with the principle in another page, and all that I have to add here is, that I would go further and limit without any hesitation the hours of all persons under the age of twenty-one years. It has seemed wise to the legislators who framed the Factory and Workshop Act to fix the age, up to which a legal limitation shall apply, at eighteen. I cannot, therefore, now expect any interference with a principle laid down so recently. All that I ask for is the inclusion of a class of young persons whose claims are quite as pressing as those already comprehended by that principle. It will be observed that I make a distinction in the hours on account of the difference in the nature of the work. Young persons in factories rarely work more than fifty-four hours a week, and I merely ask that young shop assistants shall not work more than sixty-seven hours a week. It is, I think, only fair to make such a difference, as, if the hours were reasonable, the meal times adequate, and there was a weekly short day, shop labour could not be regarded as being so arduous as factory labour. I believe, however, that shop assistants would much prefer to work harder and be liberated earlier than work so long under the present system. They must do something during the whole of the time they are under the control of their employers. Even if there are slack times as well as busy ones they avail nothing to the assistant, whose time and energies are monopolised for so many hours.

#### REGULAR MEAL TIMES.

Were I not dealing with the whole question for the purpose of silencing opposition by argument, I should have thought it unnecessary to attempt for one moment to show that adequate meal times are essential to the maintenance of health. At present the majority of shop assistants only have from fifteen to twenty minutes allowed for dinner and from ten to fifteen



minutes allowed for breakfast and tea. The evidence is very clear on this point and shows conclusively that even during these short periods the assistants are liable to be called away at any moment to serve a customer. The times allowed are surely short enough without being divided and sub-divided, as unquestionably they are. The fact is, as a rule, the food is simply "gobbled," "bolted," or crammed down as quickly as possible, and frequently when the assistants are called away from their meals they either never return to finish them, or when they do return the food is cold and unpalatable or the tables have been cleared. Now I hold such a state of things to be simply a scandal. Every principle of health is violated. Why, even paupers, scavengers, and criminals have fixed and reasonable times to take their food. What must be the bodily and mental condition of the assistant after a few months of such treatment? He rushes from the counter to the dinner-table, and, fearing to be called away at any moment, he hurries over every bite, full of suspense and excitement. Then, if there has fortunately been no call for him, as soon as ever the last mouthful is swallowed, up he must jump, only to rush straight back to the counter. This goes on daily and incessantly. Is it necessary to say that the physiological effects are ruinous? Is it surprising that dyspepsia and innumerable other forms of debility and disease speedily show themselves? Of course everyone at some time or other has been obliged to hurry over a meal, with the result of experiencing physical suffering or inconvenience, but persons who value their health will see that such occurrences are as few as possible. What of the shop assistant who suffers continually? The description I have given applies to the majority of assistants in populous places; but of course there are vast numbers who have quite half-an-hour to themselves for every meal, and free from interruption. There are others, again, who do not live on the premises, who have an hour for dinner, and half-an-hour for breakfast and tea. This is as it should be with regard to all. My object is to give every assistant who is obliged to have his meals on the premises the right to half-an-hour's absence from work for each meal, free from interruption. If he lives off the premises, and is obliged to leave them, then I propose to give an hour's absence from work for dinner, and half-an-hour for the other meals. I should besides like to see business so arranged as to allow every assistant, whether living on the



premises or not, an hour's absence from work for dinner in the middle of the day ; but probably the periods I have indicated will be such an improvement, so far as health is concerned, upon the present system, that the majority will be satisfied.

#### REST FOR YOUNG PERSONS AND WOMEN.

In order to relieve young persons and women from the physical suffering resulting from continuous standing, I provide that they shall not be obliged to stand longer than four hours and a-half without the right to demand half-an-hour's absence from work. I have already dealt with certain aspects of the evils resulting from long standing, but it will be observed that I propose to extend this protection to adult women. As a matter of fact, if the meal-times I have indicated were compulsory they would to a large extent afford the relief from long standing which I so much desire ; but at present young persons and adult assistants frequently stand six and seven hours at a stretch without a minute to sit down. This would not be remedied even with regular times for meals. I therefore provide that all young persons and women shall not stand such unreasonably long periods without the right to demand a rest to recruit their strength. It may be asked why I allow women this privilege and not men. I may say that I would gladly extend the same privilege to men, but I must at present ask for what there is a probability of obtaining. Men are unquestionably thoroughly exhausted after protracted standing, but they cannot possibly suffer or deteriorate so much as women. We must, therefore, in the first instance protect the weakest, and the example thus set cannot fail to be of advantage to adult men. Women, it is known, labour under physical disqualification three months out of the twelve, and if circumstances are such as to oblige them to stand long hours, even with weak frames and during the periods of physical disability, it is, I take it, the least we can do to see that they are not deprived of the scant relief which would be afforded by a short absence from work for rest and natural requirements. Surely it is not too much to ask for thirty minutes' rest after standing four hours and a half !

#### A WEEKLY HALF-HOLIDAY.

I also propose that every assistant in the towns and places specified shall be entitled to leave work at or before five o'clock



on one day in every week after having worked seven hours. This may be termed the short day or half-holiday clause. It is nothing new so far as young persons are concerned, but is an innovation as regards adults. Although believing in the principle of State interference with adult labour in certain cases, I have not, for obvious reasons, included adults in my Bill except as to meal times and the half-holiday. Whether the House of Commons will further invade, even to this limited extent, the domain of adult labour, remains to be seen. I, of course, contend with submission that the Legislature should have no hesitation in doing so when the evils to be removed are so glaring. As to the application, however, of this short day principle to young persons, no arguments are necessary. The work has been done in other departments of industry, and this is simply the case of an extension of an already admitted principle. Is there, under the circumstances, any good reason why adult assistants should not have a compulsory short day? They work as long and may probably have to work longer than the young persons—they have had to pass through years of shop labour with all its unhealthy incidents—they are subject to the same weariness, ill-health and disease, and they are almost as powerless to protect themselves as the minors. They might, it is true, combine, and the example set by a Parliamentary regulation may cause a reaction in their favour. But then it might not, and I have already pointed out the almost insuperable obstacles there are to effective combination. Even if the adults were able to form a powerful trades union to-morrow, with the ability to coerce employers, I fail to see that it is good policy to cause so much social strife when the desired reform can be attained by, so to speak, a stroke of the pen, without disturbing for one moment the good relations at present existing between employer and employed. Certain thinkers, of course, say it is bad policy to interfere with adult labour. It may be so generally, yet not in this and many other instances. Personal liberty would not be interfered with, but, on the contrary, natural rights would be vindicated. The producing power of the country would not be lessened, whilst the health and morals of those concerned would be immensely improved. However well argued the principle may have been in the House of Commons, and however sacred it may be regarded in consequence by some, I am of opinion that no principle is worth maintaining that blinds its supporters to the necessi-



ties of the age, and allows the health of the people to deteriorate. The health of men and women should take precedence of artificial principles. Doctrines and theories cannot be understood or be thoroughly efficacious, unless practically applied for the benefit of the community. In this case it is to the general welfare that men and women should be freed from a tyrannical system which destroys their energies and extinguishes their natural rights.

#### COMPULSORY WRITTEN CHARACTERS.

Another provision which I regard as of deep importance is that which obliges employers to give their assistants characters. It has been said and truly that those who suffer most from these long hours have displayed an apathy which by some is urged as an indication that there is no substantial grievance. If a class suffers they will unquestionably cry out—if not prevented. Shop assistants, however, as I have already endeavoured to point out, are surrounded by obstacles which fetter their freedom of action. The majority are young and inexperienced—they are prevented from mixing with their fellows by reason of the long hours—they are for the same reason precluded from belonging to any association that might advance their interests—their salaries are small—large numbers belong to the country, and if they leave their situations they are without a home—the competition is exceedingly keen—if they displease their employer in any way, not even connected with their business capacity, a character is either refused altogether, or one may be given unjust to the assistant. These and many more incidents of shop labour place the assistant in the almost absolute power of the employer and within the ruinous grasp of the long hours system. Mental and manly effort becomes almost impossible. Everything militates against the assertion of manly qualities, and, as a result, a servile spirit is engendered, which tends to make the assistant a complaisant nonentity, ready to submit to anything, because there seems no way of escape. Knowing, as employers do, that it is always within their power to withhold a character, or to colour it in accordance with their own interests, many of them inflict all kinds of impositions, on the assumption that the assistants dare not complain. There are fines, for instance,



arbitrarily exacted for all kinds of manufactured offences—they are not allowed to do this or to do that—they dare not join or avow their sympathy with any association of which the employer disapproves—they must not take newspapers or periodicals whose teachings are not approved of by the head of the establishment ; and, in fact, there are countless things which assistants must not do—none of which in any way interfere with their business aptitude—for fear of instant dismissal without a character. Such petty tyranny is an insult to their manhood, and naturally crushes their spirits and independence. I should like to know what a mechanic or artizan would say to all these paltry restrictions on his freedom and liberty. I do not, as I have said before, place all employers in the same category. I am merely dealing with those who abuse their power to thwart the early closing movement by stifling and checking, whenever they can, a spirit of independence. The ability of the employer to blast the prospects of an assistant has been a serious obstacle to reform. For this reason, and others even more cogent, I have come to the conclusion that the law should, so to speak, guarantee to an assistant that his character shall not be trifled with for selfish purposes or pecuniary gain. Character is of vital importance to every one, but doubly so to those whose daily bread is dependent upon it. In various departments of the public service a certificate of character is given on discharge or otherwise, and I see no reason why the same principle should not be extended, not only to assistants, but to every one who for any reason desires to have a record of the past.

#### SUNDAY LABOUR AND EDUCATION.

I have also provided that no child or young person shall be allowed to work on a Sunday. I should very much have liked to have seen a prospect of stopping Sunday trading altogether, as I am quite sure there is no necessity whatever for business to be conducted on the Sabbath day. I am well aware that it does not prevail to a large extent, but in London and other large towns hundreds of drapers', grocers', tailors', butchers', and other shops are open until mid-day on Sunday, without any excuse whatever except the desire to make money, by pandering to the thoughtlessness of persons who might without difficulty make their purchases on Saturday. I am not,



of course, dealing with refreshment houses of any description. They come under a different category. My inclination, however, would be to prevent the buying and selling on the Sabbath of all articles of use or consumption, because one day out of the seven should be kept inviolate as a means of maintaining the mental, moral, and physical strength of the people, as well as sustaining the national devotion to religion. All, however, that I seek to do on the present occasion is to prevent children and young persons below eighteen years of age of both sexes from working on a Sunday. The reasons for this are too obvious to need explanation. It is but fit that youth should be protected and well grounded in those principles which are essential to the prosperity of the nation. I have also thought it advisable to extend the educational provisions of the Factory and Workshop Act to shops and warehouses. Why these establishments have been overlooked I am at a loss to conceive. Boys and girls employed therein are surely quite as worthy of State protection as those engaged in factories and workshops. There are no grounds to warrant their exemption, and it is quite unnecessary to adduce arguments in support of a proposition which has already received universal assent.

A measure of this description should, properly speaking, apply to every shop and warehouse in the kingdom in which assistants are employed ; but it is well known that in small towns and in rural districts there is no necessity whatever to interfere, except probably on the ground of sanitary inspection. The conditions of labour in such places are as different as possible from the surroundings of those who live in towns. Country assistants have, as a rule, fresh air, a half-holiday, and comparatively easy work. It would, therefore, be folly to attempt to interfere with such persons. I therefore propose to confine the operation of the Act to towns and places with a population of 20,000 persons and upwards. If, of course, everything is regular and proper, there should be no fear on the part of any trader of a salutary enactment of this description. Those only may grumble at State interference whose houses are not in order. Where the hours are reasonable and the conditions are healthy, the employer will have nothing to care for, but if the ventilation is bad and young persons are being overworked, the sooner an Inspector interferes the better.



## INSPECTION AND PENALTIES.

Administrative precautions or penalties are of course indispensable to the successful operation of almost every Act of Parliament. It may be a sore point with some traders to be obliged to post up notices, to receive an inspector, and to be liable for breaches of the Act, but all legislation touches the susceptibilities of some class or other, and I have yet to learn that there is anything in the position of retail traders which entitles them to be exempted from the pains and penalties to which manufacturers of every description are subjected under the Factory and Workshop Act. It would suit cabmen to exact half a guinea for driving a mile ; it would please careless persons to send their children to work instead of to school ; it would be agreeable to filthy persons to live in kennels of dirt ; it would enrich factory owners if they could work children and young persons as long as they used to do ; and, in fact, it would please the majority of selfish persons to impose all sorts of harsh conditions on those within their power if the law did not punish offenders in the interests of the community. And shopkeepers will unquestionably have to submit to the visits of the factory inspector as those now do who employ milliners and dressmakers. There is surely nothing objectionable in simply complying with an Act of which all sensible men approve. A copy of the Act and a schedule containing the periods of employment and the ages of the children and young persons employed on the premises, together with all other necessary particulars, would have to be posted up in a conspicuous part of the shop. The inspector would have access at any reasonable time, and assistants might be interrogated with reference to anything within the scope of the Act. The factory inspectors have, as far as I can learn, discharged the delicate duties devolving upon them in a manner which employers have no cause to complain of, and I believe there would be no more friction between the inspectors and the retail traders than there has been between them and factory owners.

## LAX ADMINISTRATION OF FACTORY ACT.

If anything, there has been too much consideration shown for employers, as evidence is not wanting to show, in



some districts at all events, that children and young persons suffer from the lax administration of the Factory and Workshop Act. In the report of the committee appointed to inquire into the condition of the homes of the Southwark poor the following lines occur: "It would be well if the Factories Act was, in regard to the labour of women, more stringently put in force, as there is now reason to believe that its administration is considerably neglected. To properly carry out the intention of Parliament there should be female inspectors to overlook the places where women and girls are employed, as many of them are entirely unfit for women to pass most of their lives in. What is the good of endeavouring to improve the homes if the workshops and factories are pest-houses which lower the moral and physical stamina of the young girls and women who, through no fault of their own, are bound to remain most of their time in those places? Dr Dickson, medical officer of Bermondsey, in his last year's report, says that in his district the death-rate among females in Bermondsey was higher than in London. The reason why women die more rapidly than men may be attributed to the fact that in factories and workshops they are more dependent and less able to take care of themselves than the stronger sex. They should therefore have the Factories Act carried out stringently in their favour, especially the sanitary portion of it which would include proper breathing space, ventilation, white-washing, and other such matters." This is a piece of testimony from one part of London only, and probably a careful investigation would show that although on the whole the Factory and Workshop Act is fairly well administered, yet it might in many localities be more stringently enforced in the interests of employés. It is, however, expedient on the part of officials to handle new laws tenderly, so as to avoid unfriendly conflicts between capital and labour. The result, therefore, of the administration of the Factory and Workshop Act leads me to believe that shopkeepers on the whole will have nothing to complain of so far as inspection is concerned.

#### FEMALE FACTORY INSPECTORS.

I am convinced, however, that the interests of female workers falling within the operation of the Factory and Workshop Act cannot be properly attended to by male inspectors. Female



inspectors should be appointed. There are many questions concerning the cleanliness and decency of the surroundings of female labour which a natural delicacy would preclude a man from interfering with, but which a woman could deal with in the most thorough manner. The natural barriers between the young of both sexes should be guarded and kept as sacred as possible. The tendency in factories is in the other direction, and the administration of the Factory Act by men in the interests of women either strengthens that tendency or leaves the interests and surroundings of females without that strict inspection which so vitally concerns their health. An inspector may of course interrogate the female employer of a number of milliners and dressmakers, and he may elicit information from the girls themselves; but I hold that a female inspector would do it far better, and with less chance of being deceived. There are no difficulties in the way of appointing female inspectors to guard female interests, and even if there were, they should make way for the interests of those whom the law was intended to protect, for without doubt it is now extensively evaded for want of female inspectors, as many young women know to their serious disadvantage. The following, affording at least one instance, appeared recently in the *St James's Gazette*, and I have no doubt many more would speak out if they had a female inspector to appeal to. This is the statement of a milliner whom the Factory and Workshop Act was designed to protect:—

“I see that people have been writing to the newspapers a good deal about the harm some girls do to their health by always studying when they are young, and so injuring themselves and making it likely that their children will be weak and delicate. I don't know much about that, because they are not the sort of girls that come to Mdme. Célimène's: her customers do not often look as if they had hurt themselves by studying too much. But I have seen a good deal of the overworking of young ladies in houses of business; and I thought you might like to know something about it.

“Of course most of us get married when we are offered the chance, and sometimes we are not very particular what the chance is like; and I don't think you can blame us much for that when you consider our life. I don't know how it may be in some of the large places where a great number of young ladies are employed; but this is what it is at Mdme.



Célimène's. We have to begin work at eight every morning ; and we go on till eight at night, without any stopping except for our meals. We are supposed to have two hours for these ; but in the season, when we are all busy and have more orders than we can get through, we often don't have as much as an hour for all our meals together. Of course that is against the law, as we all know, because a printed copy of the Factory Act hangs up on the wall of the work-room ; and we can't very well help seeing it, because it is the only ornament there, except some bundles of silk and thread and a good many fly-marks. But it does not do us much good to know that the law is being broken one day in every two. There is nobody to complain to except the inspector, and when he comes he generally walks round with Mdme. Célimène or the forewoman ; and of course any girl who said anything to him when they were by would lose her place directly and perhaps never get another. So we think it wiser to hold our tongues. If we could let out all we knew, we could tell other ways in which the law is broken. Perhaps you would not believe it, but it is true all the same, that in many a house of business the girls are kept working till half-past ten and eleven o'clock day after day through the best part of the season. That may not seem very much, I dare say, when you hear it told ; but it is bad enough when you have to do it. Where I am there are twenty girls—dressmakers and milliners—all sitting round three oblong tables in a room not bigger than an ordinary drawing-room, with only one window. You can think what the air of that room is like in July when we have all been working in it for twelve hours. There we sit all through the morning, afternoon, and evening—twenty of us—stitching and trimming away, with the sun pouring in on us, and the room getting closer and closer till you feel you can hardly bear it any longer ; and then, when eight o'clock comes and you are dying to get out and have a mouthful of fresh air, you are told that you will have to stop for an hour longer, or perhaps two or three hours. I have seen some of the younger girls put their heads down and cry quietly when they heard they could not go, and I have felt like crying myself if it was any use. Perhaps you won't believe this is the case, because you know it is illegal to keep us working more than twelve hours without a special order. But I know that it is done sometimes ; and I dare say, if anybody was to inquire care-



fully, he would find that it is done very often. Now and then it gets found out, and you hear of somebody being summoned and fined ; but it happens lots of times when it is not found out. Of course the girls might tell the inspector : but none of us would dare to say anything to him. Besides, Mdme. Célimène is a very nice lady with very nice manners ; and when she says to the inspector that it is all right, of course he does not doubt her.

“ But I think the work is too hard for us, even when they don't go beyond the proper time. I think twelve hours' work every day except Saturday is too much for most women. Lots of the girls are quite young, and some have been brought up in the country. They come to be apprenticed looking as fresh and healthy as possible ; but after two or three years you would be surprised at the change in them. They have lost all their freshness and have grown thin and pale ; and I could tell you of more than one that has faded away and gone into a decline through being at business too long. You have no idea how you feel at the end of the week when you have been sewing every minute, as you may say, and only stopping when you are asleep. Your head is swimming and your eyes hazy, and you can't sleep properly or enjoy your food. It is no wonder you get out of sorts ; but of course most of us can't afford to indulge our fancies, and have to go on working whether we are quite up to it or not. It is just the two or three hours at the end that are the worst. If they ever make a new Factory Act, I hope they will make it the law that we are to work only nine hours or ten hours, instead of twelve. Women must work for their living often enough ; but I don't think they ought to be allowed to work so hard that they ruin their health in a very few years. Besides, it is harder a great deal than most young men work, I am sure. My brother George is a clerk in a warehouse in the City, and he begins at nine and comes away at six ; and then in summer he goes off to play cricket or rides his bicycle. Mother says George looks the picture of health, while I am getting thinner and paler every day ; and what wonder ? ”

Now, although the propositions contained in the Bill which I have drafted appear to be so reasonable, they will unquestionably be opposed by those members of Parliament who are anxious to give expression to the views of the minority of shopkeepers.



Having opposed early closing, and thwarted the half-holiday movement, they will not, I take it, yield without a struggle. I trust, however, that better counsels may prevail, and that interested opposition will not show itself. Criticism and suggestions there must be, and no one is more willing than I am to receive advice from those who understand the question, and who at the same time are anxious to reform the present system. Already the lines on which the opposition will proceed have been indicated, and when the Shop Hours Regulation Bill is discussed in the House of Commons we may expect to hear the old phrases, "Grandmotherly legislation," "Unjustifiable interference with the liberty of the subject," "It is contrary to the principles of political economy," and many more antiquated expressions, paraded before the public in order to obscure the real issue. I have already dealt with several arguments urged by the obstructionists of early closing, and perhaps I cannot do better to strengthen what I have said than by showing how questions of this kind have recently been treated. Professor Jevons,\* who has made a special study of the subject of "The State in Relation to Labour," makes the following pregnant comments:—

#### THE PRINCIPLES OF INDUSTRIAL LEGISLATION.

'We have to distinguish, as far as possible, between cases in which individuals should be left at liberty, as being the best judges of their own interests, and those cases in which some kind of authority should interfere, in order to ensure or increase their welfare. Imagine, for the sake of illustration, that there is in some factory a piece of revolving machinery which is likely to crush to death any person carelessly approaching it. Here is a palpable evil which it would be unquestionably well to avert by some means or other. But by what means? It is obvious that there are many possible courses to choose between, and much to be said for and against each particular course.

'In the first place, it may fairly be said that the individual workman is bound to take care of himself, and to be especially wary when approaching machinery. Mere common sense, we might think, would lead people to avoid negligent conduct

\* "The State in Relation to Labour," by W. Stanley Jevons. Macmillan & Co.



likely to be instantly and inexorably punished with sudden death, or the most fearful and painful mutilation. As a general rule, at least, adult persons must take care of themselves, and observe where they are going. If everybody is to go in leading-strings, it is obvious that there will be no persons left to act as leaders. It may well be urged, too, that the more we guard people from palpable dangers, the more heedless they will become, and the more likely to fall victims to some unforeseen danger. But a little observation and reflection show that to such general rules and arguments there must be exceptions. It is all very well for theorists and "cabinet philosophers" to argue about what people ought to do; but if we learn from unquestionable statistical returns that thousands of hapless persons do, as a matter of fact, get crushed to death, or variously maimed, by unfenced machinery, these are calamities which no theory can mitigate.

' Evidently there must be cases where it is incumbent on one citizen to guard against danger to other citizens. If one man digs a pit in search of coal, and, not finding coal, leaves the hole uncovered, to be half hidden by grass and brambles, he is laying a mere trap for his neighbours; he might as well at once lay man-traps and spring-guns in the old-fashioned way. Are all neighbours to grope their way about in constant fear of a horrible, lingering death, because he dislikes the trouble of filling up or covering the pit he has made? So obviously unreasonable was such neglect, that we find a customary law existing in the Forest of Dean two hundred years ago, requiring every owner of an abandoned pit to cover it over. Now, revolving machinery is in many cases quite on a par with uncovered coal-pits. When the putting up, at inconsiderable expense, of a few bars of wood or iron will remove all danger and difficulty, surely it is much better simply to put them up, and avoid all metaphysical argument.

' Unfortunately the metaphysician cannot be kept at bay in so simple a way. Having once decided that the fly-wheel ought to be fenced, we have but raised a series of questions relating to the person who ought to put up the fences, and the other persons who have either a right or a duty to take care that he puts them up. We might, in the first place, assume that the owner of dangerous machinery would fence it from motives of mere humanity, if not from those of self-interest. But here again experience proves the existence of unaccount-



able thoughtlessness, if not heartlessness. Before the Legislature began to interfere, hardly any owner of machinery thought of incurring the small additional percentage of cost requisite to render the machinery safe to the operatives. Plenty of documentary evidence exists, moreover, to show that legislation on the subject was distinctly opposed by factory owners. In other cases mere thoughtlessness and indifference can alone be charged against the owners. In one of the reports of factory inspectors we are told that when the inspector remonstrated against the dangerous unfenced condition of a fly-wheel, the owner calmly remarked that it had no doubt killed a man not long before; he made no objection to erecting the necessary fence, the idea of which did not seem to have previously occurred to his mind.

'It is obvious, then, that somebody ought to suggest ideas of the sort to the erectors of dangerous machine traps. But there is still a wide choice of means and persons. The men employed about the factory might be expected to meet together, and, through their trades union or otherwise, insist upon proper fences being put up. But, as a matter of fact, the men have not generally taken this reasonable course. Whether from false pride, want of thought, or otherwise, the last people to complain about danger seem to be the people exposed to it. The public in general, through the agency of some society such as the Royal Humane Society, might be expected to step in from humanitarian motives, and either fence the machinery at their own cost, or oblige the owners to do it. But there is nothing more fickle and unaccountable than the humanity of the public in general. The Legislature might frighten the owner of machinery into carefulness by making negligence into manslaughter, should a fatal accident occur. Judges and juries might do much to the same end by awarding heavy damages against the owner. But there remains one other mode of solving the question which is as simple as it is effective. The law may command that dangerous machinery shall be fenced, and the executive government may appoint inspectors to go round and prosecute such owners as disobey the law.'

#### THE PRINCIPLE OF LIBERTY.

'Of course the case treated above is but a simple example of the questions which arise in every matter relating to the



health, safety, convenience, or general welfare of the workman. If an employer offers a man work in a very unhealthy workshop, and the man accepts the work and its conditions, are the employer and the workman at perfect liberty to carry out such a contract? Has the community nothing to say to the matter? Is the Legislature to save the man from sudden death by the rotating fly-wheel, and yet to leave him, unwarned and unaided, to a slower but surer death by steel particles, phosphorous vapour, clay dust, lead poisoning, or some other easily avoidable source of injury? The answer may depend no doubt upon the question whether the operative is an adult man, an adult woman, a young person (*i.e.* a boy or girl of the age of fourteen years and under eighteen years), or a helpless child. But, even in the extreme case of the adult man experience unquestionably shows that men from mere thoughtlessness or ignorance incur grave injuries to health or limb which very little pressure from the Legislature would avert with benefit to all parties. The difficult question thus arises whether, out of respect to some supposed principle of individual liberty, the State ought to allow men to go on working and living in the midst of needless risks.

‘It may well be urged on the one hand, that the liberty of the subject is an indefeasible right of Englishmen, and a fundamental principle of English law. Not only is liberty in itself a prime element in happiness, but it is also the necessary condition of that free development from which all our social blessings arise. Liberty is a theme upon which it would be possible to enlarge very considerably, and it is always a popular theme.

‘But if my study of this subject has led to any true results, the first step must be to rid our minds of the idea that there are any such things in social matters as abstract rights, absolute principles, indefeasible laws, inalterable rules, or anything whatever of an eternal and inflexible nature. We deal here, it should be observed, only with a lower class of relations, and have nothing directly to do with those higher questions of ethical science, of moral obligation, of conscience, of religious conviction, in which we may rightly seek for a firmer basis. Legislation undoubtedly must take account of moral feelings, and must usually conform to the prevailing opinions of the people. Yet a positive law is a very different thing from a moral rule; the former deals only with outward acts; the latter



both with acts and motives. Not uncommonly conflict arises. A nonconformist refuses to pay church-rates or Easter offerings; a clergyman declines to recognise the authority of a temporal court; an anti-vaccinationist prefers fine and imprisonment to allowing a slight but life-saving operation on his children; one of the "peculiar people" goes still further, and maintains that it is the law of God not to call in a physician to a dying child. All these cases raise very difficult questions; but the attitude of the law is simple. Either the man does as the law orders, or he goes to prison. A person may entertain whatever moral feelings he thinks proper to indulge in, and in our present state of society he enjoys the further liberty of expressing those feelings nearly *but not quite* without limits. Hence he enjoys the privilege, in England at least, of endeavouring to persuade other people that the law is mistaken. If he succeeds, it is well; if not, he must practically conform.

'But the law in itself has nothing to do with conscience, nor religion, nor even with moral right and wrong, as estimated by individuals. Moreover, it knows nothing of absolute principles from which we must not diverge. It is but a series of arbitrary rules, accumulated or varied from century to century, and defining the terms on which people may best live in each other's society. It is a system of adjustments and compromises, founded upon experience and trial. The complication of social relations is such that no simple unqualified laws can hold good in all cases; necessary exceptions spring up as soon as ever we try to establish a general proposition. It might surely be thought, for instance, that a man would be free to buy and sell as he thought best. Barter, moreover, being the original simple form of commerce, would *à fortiori* seem to be open to every free subject. Yet, since the fourth year of Edward IV. (cap. 1) laws have existed prohibiting the payment of wages in the manner of barter. Even at the present day the Truck Act is in full operation (1st and 2nd William IV. cap. 37), and in a number of specified trades inflicts penalties on any settlement of wages by way of barter, the third offence being treated as a misdemeanour punishable by fine only at the discretion of the court. Curiously enough, however, this law does not apply to agricultural labourers, domestic servants, and various other important classes of the employed. What is a misdemeanour in an iron-work or cotton-mill, is the most familiar



arrangement possible in the adjoining farmhouse. All that can be said in favour of the law, and it is probably sufficient, is that repeated inquiry and long experience ever since the time of King Edward IV. have shown that masters abuse the liberty of making barter contracts with their workmen. But what becomes of that celebrated entity, "the liberty of the subject"?

'It may be imagined, again, that a person has an absolute right to his own property. Apart from the difficulty of defining what is his own property, a cursory examination of the statute book would show that this absolute right has been invaded in every conceivable way. Taxation is in complete conflict with the supposed absoluteness of the right. Even property in a man's own labour has never been absolute: sailors were pressed into the navy; military service was in former centuries compulsory, as it now is in most continental countries, and in theory yet is in England; statute labour was required to mend the roads. The compulsory purchase of land for railways, water-works, and other enterprises of public utility, is a further invasion of absolute rights, although accompanied in most cases by abundant, if not superfluous, compensation. The new Irish Land Act is destructive to the absolutist theory, as regards Ireland at least; that Act has been denounced as contrary to all the principles of political economy. But when a country has arrived at a state of social disorganisation, the probabilities of good implied in those principles are met by certainty of evil, and the question simply is by what least sacrifice to approximate to a sounder state of things.

'There is, indeed, no subject more generally misconceived than the relation which exists between economics and legislation. It is generally supposed that the economist is a presumptuous theorist, who is continually laying down hard-and-fast rules for the conduct of other people. Everybody is to buy in the cheapest market, and sell in the dearest; marriage is to be restrained as much as possible; paupers are to be reduced to the verge of starvation; strikes are not to be endured, and so forth. It is possible that such ideas may have been put forward by some over-dogmatic economist such as MacCulloch. For the most part, however, they arise from the misinterpretation by the public of the relation between science and practice. It is one thing to demonstrate scientifically the tendency of population to progress in a geometric



ratio ; it is quite another thing to infer that marriage should therefore be discouraged, still more that it should be discouraged by some particular measure, which might involve consequences of the most varied character.

‘As, then, in philosophy the first step is to begin by doubting everything, so in social philosophy, or rather in practical legislation, the first step is to throw aside all supposed absolute rights or inflexible principles. The fact is that legislation is not a science at all ; it is no more a science than the making of a ship or a steam-engine, or an electrical machine, is a science. It is a matter of practical work, creating human institutions. There are sciences which instruct us in the making of a ship or an engine, and which, by giving us comprehension of its nature, enable us to use it well or to improve it. In these sciences there may be general principles of nature. So there may be general sciences of ethics, of economics, of jurisprudence, which may much assist us in the work of legislation. But before we can bring the principles down to practice they run into infinite complications, and break up into all kinds of exceptions and apparent anomalies.’

#### GROUNDS AND LIMITS OF LEGISLATION.

‘It may be fearlessly said that no social transformation would be too great to be commended and attempted if only it could be clearly shown to lead to the greater happiness of the community. No scheme of Bellers, or Babeuf, or Robert Owen could be resisted, if only their advocates could adduce scientific evidence of their practicability and good tendency. No laws, no customs, no rights of property are so sacred that they may not be made away with, if it can be clearly shown that they stand in the way of the greatest happiness. *Salus populi, suprema lex.* But it ought to be evident that before we venture upon a great leap in the dark, we may well ask for cogent evidence as to the character of the landing-place. The question resolves itself into one of logic. What are the means of proving inductively or deductively that a certain change will conduce to the greater sum of happiness? In the case of any novel and considerable change direct experience must be wanting. The present social arrangements have the considerable presumption in their favour that they can at least exist, and they can be tolerated. A heavy burden of proof, there-



fore, lies upon him who would advocate any social change which has not or cannot be tested previously on the small scale. Wherever direct experience can assure us that good is to be obtained by a certain course, we may with some confidence venture to adopt it. In hardly any case, however, are the consequences of an action or a law limited to the direct obvious results. As Bastiat said, we must take into account "what is not seen" as well as "what is seen."

'To descend, however, from philosophy to the practical subject before us, I conceive that the State is justified in passing any law, or even in doing any single act which, without ulterior consequences, adds to the sum total of happiness. Good done is sufficient justification of any act, in the absence of evidence that equal or greater evil will subsequently follow. It is no doubt a gross interference with that metaphysical entity, the liberty of the subject, to prevent a man from working with phosphorus as he pleases. But if it can be shown by unquestionable statistics and the unimpeachable evidence of scientific men that such working with phosphorus leads to a dreadful disease, easily preventable by a small change of procedure, then I hold that the Legislature is *prima facie* justified in obliging the man to make this small change. The liberty of the subject is only the means towards an end; it is not itself the end; hence, when it fails to produce the desired end, it may be set aside, and other means employed. Wherever, in like manner, palpable evil arises, the Legislature is justified [if not bound to inquire whether by some special change of law that evil might not be avoided. It is obvious, however, that in this inquiry all effects of the proposed act, whatever be their remoteness or uncertainty, must be taken into account. Direct observation, therefore, will not usually be all-sufficient. There may be collateral or secondary effects of an action which will not be apparent for years to come.'

#### LEGISLATIVE EXPERIMENTATION.

'But in order that we may pursue a truly Baconian course in legislation, we must not merely make experiments, but we must make them in the particular way calculated to prove or disprove the conclusion in view. There is manifest advantage, for instance, in making a legislative change in certain cities or districts only, so that we may observe what happens both



where the change is in operation, and also in closely proximate places, where it is not in operation. This is often the only way in which we can clearly learn what is really the effect of the change in question; because if applied universally the effects of the new course will be merged into the general aggregate of many existing and varying effects. Nor is there usually any practical obstacle in the way of such partial trial. The Postmaster-General actually applied the experimental method in the introduction of the penny stamp savings bank forms. These forms were first tried by distribution in certain selected counties, and the results were inquired into before the measure was adopted generally. Although the case was not one suited to test the method effectively, the complete success of the trial tends distinctly in favour of experimental legislation.

‘It is not possible to repeat here all that may be said in favour of direct appeal to experience. The fact, however, is, that the real difficulty will consist, not in making such appeals, but in knowing when to make them, how to interpret the results, and how far to depend upon our inferences. Experience must be our guide when we can enjoy such an advantage, but it is often the most difficult thing in the world to know what experience teaches. The palpable and direct result will often be the least part of the matter. A fence erected around machinery palpably saves people from falling among such machinery; but how are we to prove that it does not generate recklessness which will lead the people to fall into other dangers? We have to fall back upon vague presumptions and general inferences. An operative advocating a strike may easily point to other strikes in like circumstances which have benefited the strikers—to all appearance. Here are experiments to the point. It would require a great deal of inquiry and much argument of a vague kind to convince an economist that the striker really was benefited in the long-run.

‘It will now be apparent that the true method of approaching a legislative measure assumes the form of a complicated logical and scientific problem. It is granted, or at least assumed, that anything is right and expedient in legislation which adds to the sum of happiness of the community. But how to show this? It is not sufficient to show by direct experiment or other incontestable evidence that an addition of



happiness is made. We must also assure ourselves that there is no equivalent or greater subtraction of happiness,—a subtraction which may take effect either as regards other people or subsequent times. This, it need hardly be said, is a more difficult matter. There is the difficulty of discovering and measuring, as Bastiat so clearly put it, “that which is not seen, as well as that which is seen.” Let it, moreover, be clearly understood that in thus endeavouring to see the invisible we must make use of any science, or of all sciences which have any bearing upon the matter.’

DIRECT INTERFERENCE OF THE STATE WITH LABOUR.—  
THE FACTORY AND WORKSHOP ACT, 1878.

‘The manner, occasion, and degree in which the State may interfere with the industrial freedom of its citizens is one of the most debatable and difficult questions of social science. Existing legislation, which all allow to be necessary, obliges us on the one hand to look upon such interference as justifiable in certain circumstances; more general considerations lead us to look upon freedom as the normal state. There is a wide intervening tract, where the line of demarcation is very differently drawn by different thinkers. The question arises, moreover, whether the matter is not one which must be decided according to circumstance of time, place, history, and national character.

‘The most important mass of legislative enactments relating to labour is contained in the Factory Acts, now consolidated into the very important, long, and complicated statute known as the Factory and Workshop Act, 1878 (41 Vict. cap. 16). This Act, mainly due, as regards the passing, to Mr (now Sir) Assheton Cross, forms a complete code of factory regulations, and replaces about sixteen previous statutes, which are enumerated and repealed in a schedule. There can be no doubt that, whether we look to the several more tentative Acts by which this was preceded, to the inquiries connected with them, to the diligent and zealous labours of the factory inspectors, to the thorough inquiries of the Factory Act Commissioners of 1875,—conducted to no small extent by personal examination of the workshops,—or finally, to the prolonged and exhaustive debates in committee of the House of Commons, by which the details of the Act were



finally settled,—this Consolidation Act is one of the brightest achievements of legislation in this or in any other country. The great fact is that it embodies disinterested legislation: the health and welfare of the people at large form the sole object: no one class or trade is to be promoted, as in almost all the older industrial laws. If anything, it involves a sacrifice on the part of those capitalists and employers who were greatly concerned in passing it.

‘This Act (41 Vict. cap. 16), which has no preamble at all, consists, in addition to two preliminary sections giving the short title and commencement of Act, of four principal parts, and six schedules. The first part contains the general law relating to factories and workshops, treating in succession of sanitary provisions, the safety of employes, their employment and meal hours, holidays, the education of children, certificates of fitness, and notice and investigation of accidents. Part II. is of a more detailed character, and provides specially for particular classes of factories and workshops as regards health and safety, special restrictions of employment, special exceptions regarding Jews, meal hours, overtime, night-work, domestic employment, etc. In Part III. the machinery of administration is provided—the appointment of inspectors, certifying surgeons, regulation of clocks, provision of registers, enforcement of penalties, and legal procedure, being provided for. There yet remains Part IV., which settles the difficult question of definitions of terms, the mode of application of the Act to Scotland and Ireland, and adds a few trifling exceptions, finally repealing all the previous sixteen Factory Acts, and a few sections of other Acts, as enumerated in the sixth schedule. There are, moreover, five important schedules, giving detailed lists of occupations subject to certain special restrictions or exceptions. Such, however, are the complications of this remarkable code of law,—the mere table of contents filling eight pages and the text sixty-five,—that anything approaching to a commentary upon its effects would fill a large volume. In addition to several publications of Mr Alexander Redgrave, a text-book of the Act has been published by Mr G. J. Notcutt, entitled “The law relating to Factories and Workshops, with Introduction and Explanatory Notes; comprising the Factory and Workshop Act, 1878, and the Orders of the Secretary of State made thereunder.” Second Edition. London, 1879 (Stevens).



‘It is a peculiarly difficult task to give in a few words the general effect of this Act, because there are in almost every clause various alternatives or options in addition to exceptions and other complications. Thus every abbreviated statement is of necessity more or less inaccurate. The general assumption of the Act is, that labour in textile factories involves a more severe strain than that in non-textile factories and workshops. While the longest period for which a young person or woman may be employed in textile labour without an interval for meals is four and a half hours, the corresponding limit for other labour is five hours. Textile factories are defined in section 93 as premises in which steam, water, or other mechanical power, is used in manufacturing cotton, wool, hair, silk, flax, etc., not including bleach, print, and various other kinds of works. Non-textile factories are described in a long schedule; and workshops are practically any places not being factories where manufacture is carried on.

‘The hours of work seem to be in no case absolutely fixed, but on five days a week are either to begin not before 6 A.M. and end not later than 6 P.M. (in workshops 9 P.M.), or else begin not before 7 A.M. and end not later than 7 P.M. On Saturdays work must end at or before 2 P.M. in textile and 4 P.M. in other factories and workshops. The meal-times shall amount to not less than two hours in the day in textile factories, and one hour and a half in other places of work, except on Saturday, when half-an-hour only may be allowed. The general result seems to be a working week of  $56\frac{1}{2}$  hours in textile factories, and 60 hours in non-textile factories and workshops, subject to exceptions, holidays, etc.

‘The regulations for the employment of children are of a far more complex character. The 20th section, indeed, is simple enough, absolutely prohibiting the employment in any factory or workshop of children under the age of ten years—a rule extended to industry generally by the 5th section of the Elementary Education Act of 1876, 39 and 40 Vict., cap. 79. Under sixteen years of age a certificate of fitness for factory labour must be obtained. Children are only to be worked upon the half-time system, which admits, however, two methods, either of working part of the day in the factory and another part in school, or else attending the factory and school on alternate days. On the latter system the child is treated much on the terms of a young person, but must never be



employed at work for two days in succession, nor without alteration of the days in each alternate week.

‘In the daily half-time system, morning sets of children begin with the young persons, but end at one o’clock, and afternoon sets begin at one o’clock and end with the young persons. The morning set of one week becomes an afternoon set the next week, and *vice versâ*. The Saturday half-holiday is provided for in an elaborate way. When employed in a morning or afternoon set, a child is required to attend a recognised efficient school for one attendance every day excepting Saturday. On the alternate day system two attendances shall be made on each work day preceding each day of employment. Sunday labour is prohibited on the part of all children, young persons, and women, excepting Jews, for whom special regulations are provided. There are, moreover, all kinds of special exceptions and relaxations in particular trades. Manual labour carried on by a family in their own dwelling is exempted from restriction under section 98, provided that the labour is exercised at irregular intervals, and does not furnish the whole or principal means of living. The work of straw-plaiting, pillow-lace-making, and glove-making, is expressly exempted under section 97 when carried on in a private house, and such exemption may be extended by the Secretary of State to other light, healthy handicrafts. As the terms employed do not include male persons above the age of eighteen years, except in the sections relating to safety and sanitary precautions, it follows that men are allowed to work as they like, day or night.

‘There are various further exceptions ; thus overtime is freely allowed up to nine or ten o’clock at night, when fruit has to be suddenly preserved, or railway guides bound at the end of the month, or Christmas presents rapidly pushed forward, or some similar press of work undertaken. When water-mills are liable to be stopped by drought or flood, a certain amount of overtime may be granted by the Secretary of State to make up the loss.

‘A number of additional relaxations or changes have been made by order of the Secretary of State, under powers given in several sections ; thus another day has been allowed to be substituted for the Saturday half-holiday in the case of printing-offices engaged in printing newspapers, railway time-tables, and other urgent publications, as also in certain workshops where



clothes are being made. Other orders grant a five hours' spell in the hosiery and woollen factories of certain counties; vary the holidays; alter the meal hours; allow employment during meal hours; allow thirty minutes' overtime in case of non-completion of work, and so forth.'

#### ADULT MALE LABOUR.

'It is quite possible that, at some future time, attempts will be made to press upon the attention of the Legislature measures for the restriction of adult male labour. At present, under the Factory and Workshop Act, regulation of the time of labour is carefully limited, as already explained, to the labour of children, young persons, and women. The Legislature has, in fact, always abstained from interfering with the liberty of adult men to work as long or as short a time as they like. Indirectly, however, a large number of workmen fall practically under restriction, because, where many children or women are employed, the whole labour of the factory is brought to a stand when the clock strikes the hour assigned for stopping in the Act. It is well known, however, that many men advocate the interference of the Legislature in all factories whatsoever. The ultimatum of the working classes is expressed in the following couplet:—

“ Eight hours to work, eight hours to play ;  
Eight hours to sleep, and eight shillings a day.”

'In the United States an Eight Hours Act has already been passed in some of the States, but being purely permissive in character, has proved to be a dead letter. An Act which defines a day's labour as being that of eight hours, in the absence of any stipulation to the contrary, is, of course, easily set aside, and has been generally disregarded.

'I venture to maintain that the question of limiting adult male labour in associated and organised bodies of men is not to be decided once for all on some supposed principle of liberty. The same principle, if it existed, would apply to adult women. We must treat the question on the varied and detailed grounds of expediency. No one, indeed, would propose to interfere with the workman labouring in his own private shop or dwelling. There each man can work as he likes. But where a large number of men are employed



together in a factory there is not the same individual liberty ; all must conform to the wishes of the majority, or the will of the employers, or the customs of the trade. I see nothing, therefore, to forbid the State interfering in the matter, if it could be clearly shown that the existing customs are injurious to health, and that there is no other probable remedy. Neither principle, experience, nor precedent, in other cases of legislation, prevents us from contemplating the idea of State interference in such circumstances.

‘ But we are bound in a question of this sort to place ourselves at every point of view, and to accept all kinds of information, irrespective of any strict laws of evidence. Thus, when we hear workmen debating on the moral and sanitary advantages of an Eight Hours Bill, we must remember the prevalent fallacy that the limitation of labour raises its price, and transfers some of the master’s profits to the workman’s pockets. To lessen the day’s labour by one hour, is to lessen the supply of labour by one-ninth or one-tenth part, and to the same extent to waste the efficiency of all machinery, and of the fixed capital connected therewith. It is an economic fallacy to suppose that any adequate counterbalancing advantage can, as a general rule, arise out of this loss, except of course the recreative, sanitary, or intellectual advantages (if any) to the workman from his enjoyment of more leisure time. When we observe, too, that trades unions are already constantly wrangling with employers for a reduction of hours, while individual workmen are generally ready to work overtime for a moderate inducement, we shall be led to think that there is no ground whatever for legal limitation of adult male labour in the present day. Where the interference of trade societies is already, if anything, too great, there would be harm rather than good in adding Government restrictions.’

#### GRANDMOTHERLY LEGISLATION.

‘ In spite of the conclusion just arrived at, I think it well to show by example that the Legislature has fully conceded, even for adult men, the principle of “grandmotherly legislation,” if principles must be spoken of. I may mention again the Truck Acts as a standing proof that men have been held to need the protection of the State in some of the simplest transactions of life. The freedom of contract is actually de-



stroyed by such laws. It is only necessary again to mention the Coal Mines Act and the Metalliferous Mines Act (35 and 36 Vict., caps. 76, 77), or the complicated series of Acts relating to merchant shipping, to show what a mass of legislation has already been sanctioned for the protection mainly of adult men. The provisions of the law to repress crimping and imposition by the keepers of seamen's lodgings (17 and 18 Vict., cap. 104, sections 233-238) are especially a case in point. Any person can be fined five pounds who, on board a ship within twenty-four hours of her arrival, solicits a seaman to become a lodger. The seaman is treated by the law as if he were a mere child; but there is no like law to protect the bewildered traveller, who, in stepping out of the railway-station at some strange town, finds himself beset by a score of hotel porters and touts of various descriptions.

'The point of the matter, however, is most curiously illustrated by the history of the law relating to the fencing of machinery. By the 7 and 8 Vict., cap. 15, sec. 21, it was enacted that "every fly-wheel . . . and every hoist or teagle, near to which children or young persons are liable to pass or be employed, and all parts of the mill-gearing in a factory, shall be securely fenced." When these words came to be critically read by those machinery owners, to whom they were a matter of pecuniary importance, it was argued that the limitation "near to which children or young persons are liable to pass" must have been intended to apply to all parts of the mill-gearing in a factory as well as to the fly-wheel, hoist, teagle, etc. The contrary supposition not only produced some absurd distinctions between parts which were always to be fenced and those which were only sometimes to be fenced, but it led to the very sweeping result that a vast amount of machinery to which men alone had access was to be fenced just as if women and children were in question. The principle of adult male protective legislation was in fact involved unintentionally in the awkward wording of the clause. The disputes which arose in consequence induced the Government to pass a special Act (the Factory Act of 1856, 19 and 20 Vict., cap. 38), for the purpose of explaining and limiting the words above quoted. It was enacted that "the said section 21, so far as the same refers to mill-gearing, shall apply only to those parts thereof with which children and young persons and women are liable to come in contact, either in passing or



in their ordinary occupation in the factory." Adult males, then, were to be left to be crushed to death by their own carelessness, when so small an expenditure would render these accidents nearly impossible. Twenty years later the absurdity as well as the inhumanity of this limitation seems to have become apparent, and in the Factory and Workshop Act of 1878 the sections (5 and 6) relating to the fencing of machinery apply to "any person," which of course includes the adult male. Nor, while these sections were debated in committee, was any objection made nor any reference to the old disputes. The regulations in the same Act relating to bakehouses involve men as well as boys, but it was explained by Mr Cross that they were intended for the good of the bread, not the good of the men. But the principle of legislation for men was sufficiently conceded in the matter of fencing.'

#### ADULT WOMEN'S LABOUR.

'After the remarks just made upon the expediency of restrictions on adult men's labour, it may be superfluous to consider whether like restrictions are justifiable in the case of adult women. It seems to be conceded that women are less able to take care of themselves than men, and accordingly since 1833 they have been an object of care to the Legislature. No doubt, with trifling exceptions, they have formed no trades unions, and apparently have taken no measures to protect themselves. In the case of domestic service, nevertheless, they have known perfectly well how to advance their interests. It is, indeed, a remarkable fact worthy of careful notice that while factory labour has engrossed so large a share of the attention of Parliament, and added a multitude of Acts to the Statute Book, there is really no statute law worth speaking of which relates to domestic service. The common law, which in this case means little more than custom, has been found sufficient to secure the rights and interests of adult women as well as men. This, however, seems to indicate by contrast the need for legislation where the conditions of labour are very different. The most absolute of labour prohibitions, for instance, is that of the Act of 1842 (5 and 6 Vict., cap. 99), which declared it to be "unfit that women and girls should be employed in any mine or colliery." Everybody has acquiesced in this law, and though the circumstances of mines may be



described as exceptional, so in fact in some degree are all the circumstances in which restrictive legislation has been applied. A factory where people work together in large numbers, and under necessity to remain the whole interval of time determined by the employers or by custom, is an exception to the conditions of agricultural or domestic labour which had prevailed from primeval times down to a century or two ago.

‘Professor Fawcett has upon every suitable occasion—especially in his powerful speech in the House of Commons on 30th July 1873—protested against interference with adult women’s labour on the ground that there was no more justification for interfering with their labour than there was for interfering with the labour of men.\* This opinion he repeated in the debates upon the Factory Act of 1878. His argument does not readily admit of answer except upon the grounds adopted generally. If the liberty of the subject, or any abstract indefeasible right is to be recognised, Professor Fawcett cannot be answered. But if we say that legislation is a matter of circumstance, and must be guided by experience, then there are ample grounds, not only for the Mines Act of 1842, but generally for the course of legislation in regard to women.’

#### SHOP ASSISTANTS’ LABOUR.

Professor Jevons continues:—‘An important but hitherto little regarded kind of industry is that of men, women, and young persons employed in retail shops and warehouses. Where the work done is simply that of trade, as distinguished from manufacture, the State has hitherto held entirely aloof. The distinction is clearly an artificial one in many cases; the making up of pounds of sugar and the packing of goods is clearly a manual operation, or sometimes a machine operation, identical with much that is done in factories. Grocers’ assistants, too, are frequently employed in grinding coffee, chopping loaf sugar, mixing teas, and the like. As a shopman or woman seldom sits down during the hours of work, the labour is exhausting in the long-run. In the character of the work itself there is no reason why it should not be regulated as much as various handicrafts. The anomaly of the distinction drawn by the

\* Fawcett’s “Speeches on some Current Political Questions,” p. 133.



law is strongly marked in the case of some establishments where persons employed upstairs under the Factory and Workshop Act are brought downstairs to assist in the shop as soon as the legal hour has struck upon the clock.

‘We must assume, then, that the hours of shop assistants’ labour remain unregulated from regard to the convenience of the public, or else from regard to the profits of the employers. But the interests of the employers have not been allowed to stand in the way of the creation of the Factory Acts. It seems, then, that it is the public necessity or convenience which keeps shops open to ten or twelve o’clock at night, and obliges shop assistants to labour, in many cases, from fourteen to eighteen, or even nineteen hours in the twenty-four.

‘It is well known that neither the shop people nor the philanthropic public acquiesce entirely in this state of things. The existence of many early closing associations shows the prevailing discontent. Considerable success has been achieved in some towns or parts of towns by these associations, and most high-class shops now close at six or seven o’clock, or nearly as early as we should think desirable. But in the east end of London and other poor localities the hours of closing are still very late, especially on Saturday night. The difficulty of the matter is clearly that of competition. Jones has a well-grounded fear that if he closes his shop at 7 P.M., his rival Brown will enjoy all the better trade until 9 or 10. Such gain of customers may eventually enable Brown to drive Jones out of the trade altogether. Failure in the competition of retail trade may mean ruin. No ordinary tradesman, then, can singly break through the custom of the locality. It is obvious, too, that as a chain may break from the defect of a single link, so the defection of a single grocer from an early closing association may oblige all the other grocers to withdraw. Only a strong spirit of trades unionism, or else the abstention of the public, or, in the last resort, legislative interference, can effect early closing.

‘I venture to think that the early closing of shops in so-called respectable neighbourhoods is mainly due to the fact that richer customers usually go home to dinner between 6 and 7 P.M., and, owing to our *laissez faire* system of moral legislation, ladies especially are obliged to retire from the streets about that time. The working classes, on the contrary, having come from their employment at some time between half-past



five and seven o'clock, are then prepared, if not obliged, to begin their shopping. If this be the state of the case, it seems to be very doubtful whether any considerable change will be effected without the intervention of the Legislature. As there can be no doubt about the advantage of shorter hours to the shop people, the only remaining questions regard the convenience of the public, and the practicability of enforcing a restrictive law. As to the latter point, Mr Henderson, one of the inspectors of factories in the Metropolis, expressed considerable doubt, in his evidence before the Factory Acts Commission. Considering, however, that shops depend for their trade upon publicity, and that competitors in trade would have the strongest possible motives for exposing each other's infractions of the law, I cannot see the practical difficulties. An inspector, by merely walking down a street of shops after the legal hour of closing, would discover the infractions without much difficulty.

'The real point to consider, therefore, is whether the public, especially the working-class public, would suffer. Judging from their present habits of shopping up to ten o'clock at night, and twelve o'clock on Saturday nights, they would suffer. It can hardly, indeed, be supposed that anybody is driven by necessity to buy clothes, furniture, and other permanent articles, after eight o'clock. The case may be somewhat different with food, tobacco, drinks, and other matters of immediate need. Some doubt may arise as to whether the brightly lighted streets of a poor neighbourhood do not really form the promenade ground of those who have few pleasures to relieve the dull monotonous round of a laborious life. To those who live in crowded dirty lodgings unsavoury streets may be a breathing-place, and the well-filled shop windows the only available museum of science and art. Much care and discrimination would obviously be needed, and a legislator might find the question almost as thorny as that of public-house closing and the *bona fide* traveller. In any case, it is necessary to approach the question tentatively and gradually. The experiment might, moreover, be tried at first in such separate towns as should present strong petitions in favour of it; but to prevent unfair competition the law should apply to the whole of a town, if to any part. The regulation might even be carried out by special clauses in local Acts of Parliament, in the same way that the municipal authorities



of Manchester and Liverpool are endeavouring to remedy the great abuse of young children trading in the streets at night. Such special legislation no doubt needs to be watched, but when properly watched presents the best method of gaining experience. It amounts, in fact, to experimental legislation.'

PROPER RULE THE GOOD OF THE COMMUNITY.

'The subject of State interference with labour is one in which we need above all things—discrimination. Restrictions on industry are not good nor bad *per se*, but according as they are imposed wisely and with good intentions, or foolishly, and with sinister intentions. *Primâ facie*, indeed, restriction is bad, because Providence is wiser than the legislator—that is to say, the action of the natural forces of evolution will ensure welfare better than the ill-considered laws of the prejudiced and unskilful legislator. But reason is a Divine gift, and where upon the grounds of clear experience interpreted by logical reasoning we can see our way to a definite improvement in some class of people without injuring others, we are under the obligation of endeavouring to promote that improvement. The greater part of the interference of trade societies is objectionable, because, though directed toward the welfare of a part, it is directed against the welfare of the rest of the community. All other industrial problems must be solved by similar careful estimation of the total utilitarian results.

'If such be a true view of the case it is clear that there can be no royal road to legislation in such matters. We cannot expect to agree in our utilitarian estimates, at least without much debate. We must agree to differ, and though we are bound to argue fearlessly, it should be with the consciousness that there is room for wide and *bonâ fide* difference of opinion. We must consent to advance cautiously, step by step, feeling our way, adopting no foregone conclusions, trusting no single science, expecting no infallible guide. We must neither maximise the functions of government at the beck of quasi-military officials, nor minimise them according to the theories of the very best philosophers. We must learn to judge each case upon its merits, interpreting with painful care all experience which can be brought to bear upon the matter.

'Moreover, we must remember that, do what we will, we are not to expect approach to perfection in social affairs. We



must recognise the fact clearly that we have to deal with complex aggregates of people and institutions, which we cannot usually dissect and treat piecemeal. We must often take "all in all or not at all." Tolerance therefore is indispensable. We may be obliged to bear with evil for a time that we may avoid a worse evil, or that we may not extinguish the beginnings of good. In the end we shall not be disappointed if our efforts are really directed towards that good of the people which was long ago pronounced to be the highest law.'

It would be difficult to find a clearer or more conclusive exposition of the principles on which industrial legislation ought to proceed than that contained in Professor Jevons' useful treatise. It may, however, be contended that the principles are clear enough if a case sufficiently grave be made out to warrant their application. As to this I am well fortified by a mass of testimony which cannot possibly be impeached. I have obtained evidence from employers, male and female assistants, doctors, and ministers of religion. Much of it is given further on. I must confess, however, that I have experienced considerable difficulty in obtaining it, probably for the reasons previously indicated. I know that the majority of assistants are most anxious to disclose all the unpleasant circumstances surrounding their daily toil, but fear of dismissal and other good reasons deter them from doing so. To be able to work and live is naturally their first consideration; and although many persons condemn their apathy with regard to the improvement of the conditions under which they live, I cannot but sympathise with them, because the evidence before me shows unmistakably the difficulties of their surroundings. I have set forth ample testimony to satisfy any reasonable person that the evil is quite as grave as I have represented it to be. The space at my disposal does not permit me to give the whole of the evidence; but I trust that those who wish to be convinced, and who take an interest in the question of long hours, will take the trouble to read and analyse what is said on the subject by persons who have been brought into practical contact with the causes and consequences of the system.

#### THE MEDICAL VOICE.

It is not difficult to realise that the conditions of shop labour are such as the medical faculty will condemn. But in



case there are persons who require evidence to remove their doubts, I give below a few statements made by men whose names are well known, and whose professional skill is undoubted. These scientific experts prove everything that I have said with regard to the mental, moral, and physical consequences of overwork. They assert that ten hours a day is quite long enough to work in a shop. One gentleman, Dr Richardson, even says that eight hours daily of actual work is the maximum time during which labour ought to be carried on in shops. Half-an-hour should be given for breakfast, one hour for dinner, half-an-hour for tea, yielding a daily attendance of ten hours. We must, however, be reasonable and proceed by steps, for although time may reduce the hours of labour in all departments of industry to eight per day, I shall feel considerably relieved if I succeed now in reducing the present protracted hours to eleven or twelve per day. In addition to the opinions of gentlemen who have been made acquainted with the circumstances of shop labour, I have also set forth extracts from the medical testimony delivered in evidence before a select committee of the House of Commons on the Factories Regulation Bill, and although it is many years since the evidence was given, it will be found substantially to agree with the testimony of the doctors of the present day. Sir Risdon Bennett says:—

“That he did not hesitate to assert that there was no more fruitful source of blighted health, and early death by consumption and other diseases, than the prolonged and late hours to which shopkeepers and their assistants were subjected. Whether looked at from the point of view of the political economist, or the humanitarian, or the Christian, the question was worthy of all the attention it was receiving, and all who were concerned, for the moral and social well-being of the country, should seek to forward this great and important movement.”

Norman Kerr, M.D., F.L.R., Consulting Physician to the Dalrymple Home for Inebriates. It is impossible for me to find language strong enough to convey a hundredth part of the mischief which I have seen arise from the excessive hours of labour of shop assistants who have been under my professional care. The great length of the hours at work I have seen break down strong constitutions, seriously aggravated as the evil has been by the dyspeptic misery and disease induced by the necessary bolting of food through the far too short period allowed for meals. Defective ventilation, the heated and vitiated dust and dirt-laden atmosphere of the premises, with far too often the excessive length



of working hours, in a room literally heavy-laden with noxious products from the continual burning of gas, and other physical surroundings, combine to cause a considerable amount of preventable disease, and of premature mortality. Affections of the respiratory organs, of the digestion, and of the circulation (the due performance of all which is vital to health of body and soundness of mind), and other important diseased conditions have come especially under my care, from the excessive labour of shop assistants. All these bodily derangements I have found in female assistants, who from their sex have suffered from still more grave complications. The result will be that from many of the future mothers of England, a weakly progeny will arise, which will not have stamina enough to be useful and active members of the community. These dangerous conditions of labour are much more potent in their operation on the large number of boys and girls of tender years who follow this occupation. Of the mental and moral harm I have said nothing ; but it is difficult to describe this. The nerve exhaustion and lassitude produced by the terrible overwork is so depressing, that the temptation to resort to alcoholic stimulants is almost irresistible, and I have known many male and female shop assistants, of excellent mental and moral promise, ruined in soul as well as destroyed in body, by thus falling, or rather insensibly and very naturally gliding, into habits of intoxication in this way. I need hardly add, that the whole *morale* is enfeebled by the utter prostration of mind and of body consequent on so excessive, unnatural, and unwholesome work ; and I can only sum up my opinion in the statement, that in the interests of temperance, morality, and religion, as well as of physical man and womanhood, a limitation of the hours, and an alteration of the conditions of the labour of shop assistants in many parts of the metropolis and the provinces, is an imperative duty which, if neglected, will assuredly entail no inconsiderable loss of health, strength, morality, and religious life to the British nation.

B. W. Richardson, MD., F.R.S. The effects of shop labour of the kind named on females under twenty-one, and on males under twenty-one, is of necessity injurious, as impeding their growth, and the natural development of the organs of the body. To the female, the mischief is of a kind calculated to extend to the offspring she may have to bear. The diseases incident to these long hours in the young are : anæmia, in both sexes ; dyspepsia, with much constipation and flatulence ; depression of spirits. In the females, suppressed natural function ; and in males and females, development of pulmonary consumption, where there is tendency to it. In my opinion eight hours daily of actual work is the maximum time during which labour ought to be carried on in shops. Half-an-hour should be given for breakfast, one hour for dinner, half-an-hour for tea, yielding a daily



attendance of ten hours. The depression and nervous exhaustion produced by overwork and long hours, leads without doubt to an exhaustion, which seems to be relieved for the moment by stimulants, and which produces a craving for them, to the ultimate injury and further exhaustion of the recipient.

Lawson Tait, F.R.C.S., Surgeon to Birmingham and Midland Hospital for women, and practitioner as a specialist in the diseases peculiar to women. I can speak of women only, and from large hospital experience can say that the prolonged hours of labour to which young women are subjected, in such operations as millinery and shop work generally, are extremely detrimental to their health. Forty-five minutes for dinner should be allowed, and not less than thirty for other meals. Shops as generally arranged, with their atmosphere charged with the products of gas combustion, are not conducive to health. Long hours for women produce a great variety of uterine and ovarian diseases, and the general dyscrasies of anæmia. Women should not work more than ten hours a day, and in very many cases not so many as that. A great many cases have come under my observation—women suffering from uterine displacements, chronic inflammatory diseases of the ovaries and tubes.

J. H. Rutherford, Elswick Lodge, Newcastle on Tyne. The general effect of shop labour such as described is—Upon (1) girls and boys under sixteen such confinement is likely to prevent normal development, to over-excite the nerve centres, to weaken or render morbid the mind; greatly to diminish the power of self-control, and to increase that of temptation; (2) in the case of young persons under eighteen, to lower vitality, and to produce general enfeeblement of the mental and moral nature; (3) in adults, to engender or intensify diseases of the respiratory system, of the heart, and of the nervous system. Not less than one hour and a half should be allowed for meals during the work hours. It will depend on whether the shops are well ventilated or otherwise. Diseases of debility, of mal-assimilation, of the nervous system, and in women of the uterine organs, result from long hours and constant standing. Nine hours per day is long enough to be employed in a shop, but much depends upon the sanitary condition, the food and the rests between meals. Cases resulting from shop labour, have come under my notice of diseases of the chest, and of the organs of digestion, with phthisis seem more common among shop assistants, but no statistics on the question.

Arthur W. Edis, M.D. Lond., F.R.C.P., 22 Wimpole Street, London, W. As honorary physician to the dressmaker's medical and benevolent institution, for some fifteen years, I have had ample opportunity of observing the evil effects of prolonged stand-



ing upon young women employed in houses of business in London. I consider the hours are far too long, and, at certain times, very prejudicial to the well-being of young growing girls. Too little time is allowed for meals, too little attention paid to ventilation, and, as a consequence, the general health becomes deteriorated, and any tendency to consumption is greatly intensified. Much needless suffering is produced, many disorders incidental to the female sex being greatly exaggerated, and even induced from want of appropriate rest. Fifteen minutes is far too short an interval for the mid-day meal. At least thirty minutes should be allowed, and proper facilities afforded for ensuring undisturbed abstention from business during this period. During the winter months the absence of all attempts at a proper ventilation of shops and work-rooms, in many large houses of business, proves extremely detrimental to the health of young women, and deserves the attention of the legislature. Consumption, heart disease, indigestion, dymenorrhœa, constipation, hæmorrhoids, leucorrhœa, neuralgia, varicose veins, amenorrhœa, and countless other conditions result. Eight hours a day, with a distinct interval of an hour for mid-day meal would be reasonable for young persons below eighteen years of age. Four hours' continuous labour should be succeeded by at least half-an-hours rest from work. If ten hours labour be expected during the day, interval of rest of not less than half-an-hour should be allowed at least thrice during this time. Numerous instances of disease from long hours and standing have come under my notice, such as enumerated above. Some years since I brought this subject prominently before the public, in a letter to *The Times*, and subsequently in a pamphlet on "Seats for Shopwomen," the standing evil (copy of which I forward herewith). The whole subject demands legislation. Many young women are compelled to give up work in consequence of their health becoming so impaired. Others succumb to even worse evil, preferring to lead a life of shame rather than endure the miseries of constant standing, over-work, improper feeding, instant dismissal for trivial faults, or merely momentary caprice of their employers, and other similar hardships. It is only fair to state that several of the leading West End firms treat their employés most considerately.

Robert H. Lloyd, M.D., medical superintendent, Lambeth Infirmary, S.E. No such work ought to be allowed as standing and working in a shop for twelve or fifteen hours a day on five days, and for from fourteen to seventeen on the sixth by girls and boys under 16 under any circumstances. Those hours are excessive on young persons of both sexes under 18, and tend to develop any tendency to disease that may exist in their constitution and prevent the growth of young people, and these long hours are certainly prejudicial to adults. At least half-an-hour should be allowed for each meal; three-quarters would be better; fifteen minutes is an



absurdity. The half-hour or three-quarter hour ought to be such in reality, and no assistant should be called during that period to serve any customer. The atmosphere of shops in general, and drapers' in particular is that best calculated to poison those who have to live in it, as shewn by the peculiar pallor almost characteristic of shop assistants, and ought to be the subject of official inspection. The diseases likely to be produced by shop labour as described are arrested or perverted growth, dyspepsia, anæmia, the development of any latent disease, and owing to a low tone of vitality or want of condition, a proneness to take on disease readily. For young persons below eighteen, ten hours with half-an-hour for dinner and half-an-hour for tea. For adults above eighteen, not more than twelve hours per day, with half-an-hour for dinner and half-an-hour for tea. In both cases a half-holiday once a week from 2 P.M. A great many cases of illness and disease induced and developed by shop labour and atmosphere have come under my notice. Anæmia, chlorosis, a craving for stimulants owing to want of proper time for food, dyspepsia, sleeplessness, struma, consumption, and sometimes diseases peculiar to women. The evils to be combated are not so much to be found in the large establishments, but in the small shops in the suburbs. Care should be taken that in any Bill presented to the House of Commons a clause should be inserted providing for sufficient inspection of shop premises by government inspectors specially appointed. There certainly is the danger of the expense of such inspection being an impediment, but that could be covered by every shopkeeper having to take out a licence or register his premises for a small fee. Such a proposition, I fear, is against the spirit of the age, but I give it for what it may be worth. Another great factor in the production of ill-health among shop assistants is the want of proper cubic space in the sleeping accommodation and the defective sanitary arrangements. Four girls in a room, 12 by 15 by 9 feet, is not conducive to health, and they wake up in a muddled condition in the morning, being half-poisoned by carbonic acid gas. In one word, all shops where one or more assistants are employed should be registered and subjected to government inspection as to cubic space in dormitories as well as to shop hours.

Sir Charles Bell, K.G.H., F.R.S. (late Professor to the Royal College). From nine to eighteen years, ten hours labour a day, to which must be added the time necessary for taking meals and refreshment, making twelve hours a day, is as much as can be endured, generally speaking, with impunity, by those so occupied, and more than that is painful in idea.

Peter Mark Roget, M.D., F.R.S., late a Physician to the Manchester Infirmary, and to Queen Charlotte's Hospital, London.



It appears to me that twelve hours a day, with due intermission for meals, is quite as much as the human frame is calculated to endure for any length of time.

William Sharp, junior, late Surgeon to the Dispensary, Bradford, Yorkshire. I think amongst the ill effects produced (of overwork), the injury to the general health is of more consequence than any particular deformities. I would not lay so much stress on the deformities as on the breaking up of the constitution; the injury to the general health.

Charles Turner Thacketh, Surgeon, late of Leeds. The employment cannot be considered a laborious one itself, for a short period; but it is one which requires constant attention, it is irksome and fatiguing from its uniformity, the length of time that it is followed, and the postures of body required; it may be rather denominated fatiguing than laborious; it is not hard labour. To illustrate it, let us suppose a female doomed to thread needles in constant succession and incessantly for twelve hours a day; to thread a needle is by no means a laborious operation, but the continued and unvaried employment would be irksome and fatiguing in the extreme from its uniformity, the length of time that it is followed, and the postures of the body required. I think that ten hours a day is the extreme limit that ought to be worked by young persons under eighteen years of age; it is quite enough for the healthy and robust, and too much for the feeble and delicate.

George James Guthrie, F.R.S., late Vice-President of the Royal College of Surgeons, and Surgeon of Westminster Hospital. I have been a medical officer in the armies of this country for a considerable time. A soldier is never kept under arms more than four or six hours, unless before the enemy. Eight hours out of the twenty-four is about the ordinary duty required of a soldier.

John Elliotson, M.D., F.R.S., late Physician to St Thomas' Hospital, and Medical Teacher in the London University. I think that the usual term of daily labour as established in agriculture and handicraft employments, is on the whole about as much as can be endured even by adults, with impunity.

Benjamin Travers, F.R.S., late Surgeon to St Thomas' Hospital, Southwark. I think that during the period that the human frame is arriving at its perfection, that is up to about eighteen years of age, no more than ten hours of actual labour ought to be imposed. The age mentioned is the most important period of existence, considered in its relation to after life. And I consider that next to wholesome food, pure air and wholesome exercise, by which I mean regulated variety of motion, are the principal agents in the establishment of corporeal and mental health. Over labour



without due intervals is inconsistent with the proper development of the faculties of both mind and body. After a long day's labour the mind is incapable of obtaining benefit from a system of evening instruction.

James Blundell, M.D. (late Lecturer of Physiology in the School of Guy's Hospital). I am of opinion that young persons, at that period when the osseous system is arriving at its full development and strength, ought not to labour more than twelve hours a day, including two hours for meals, refreshment, and rest. I am of opinion that overwork has a tendency to produce irritability of the nervous system, excitability of the feeling, and a certain busy play of the ideas when the mind is roused, together with the state of the mind generally, which constitutes fretfulness and discontent, and that the long hours' system has a tendency to weaken the solid strength of the mind.

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#### HAVE I MADE OUT A CASE OF HARDSHIP?

I do not, however, propose to take up time and space by repeating the testimony, but would commend the evidence as a whole to the careful scrutiny of the reader, who, I trust, at this stage will have come to the conclusion that I have made out a case which shows that the present conditions of shop labour oppress with undue severity a numerous, useful, and influential class—that the children and young persons are absolutely unable to protect themselves—and that the interests alike of the country and humanity call for State interference. The general public, it is true, are not directly concerned, although they are indirectly. But the sentiment of humanity and justice should surely impel all to abstain from being parties to a system which ruins the health and happiness of so many of their fellow-creatures. I repeat, however, that in my opinion the majority of the public are unconscious offenders. They purchase because the shops are open, and will continue to do so in spite of the most eloquent appeals. Bills containing arguments of all kinds have been circulated in almost every late district, and they have done some good, but not sufficient to prevent the careless, the thoughtless, and the indolent from entering the shop as the shutters are going up. I do not deny that a public sentiment against late shopping might be created, but I fear that however intense, there would always be a minority upon whom it would have no effect



I therefore re-maintain that the only solutions of the difficulty are to either close the shop, or liberate the assistants in the manner I propose. For although the Shop Hours' Bill is not of itself capable of removing the whole of the evils, yet it should give such an impetus to the energies of all concerned that the harsh conditions of shop labour ought to be so modified as to render the lot of the shop assistant an agreeable and healthy occupation. I would, however, at this stage solicit the help of the public, and especially the great wage-earning classes, who themselves have reasonable hours. It seems inconsistent to say the least to demand reasonable hours and a half-holiday, and then to impose, through sheer thoughtlessness, long hours upon others by purchasing at nine, ten, eleven, or twelve at night, that which might without difficulty have been bought at a much earlier hour. This question, I am sure, has never been brought before the masses of the people as prominently as it might have been, but in the interests of human labour—the foundation of all wealth and greatness—I now appeal to the working men of this country to help me in this struggle for the vindication of natural rights. It concerns the masses of the people intimately, for vast numbers of mechanics, artizans, and other workers send their sons and daughters to learn what they consider to be a more genteel business. And many young women are obliged to go to the counter on account of the poverty or death of their parents. This crusade, therefore, deeply concerns every toiler, no matter to what department of industry he belongs. I would implore every man and woman to reflect for one moment on the condition of the young boys and girls who are consigned to this withering occupation with its long hours and ceaseless standing.

#### FALSE NOTIONS.

I am at a loss to understand why so many persons send their children to be clerks and assistants. The world is simply glutted with such persons, and yet still they come. Is it because they do not like to dirty their hands, or double up their sleeves? Is it because they like to assume the appearance of gentlemen? Is it because they despise the anvil, the lathe, the chisel, the vice, or the shuttle? Is it because the desk and the counter are more profitable, or more respectable. If



so, no greater mistake was ever made. A scholar can always become a clerk, and a sharp man or woman can always be an assistant. These occupations should be a last resort, and to know a useful handicraft trade should be the first aim of every youth. Parents should abandon false notions of gentility. A black coat in these days frequently hides a sad heart, and clean hands often mean starvation. A man who can turn his hand to a good trade is always independent, and need be the slave of no one. I sincerely trust that parents will discontinue sending their children to the desk or the counter, and make them useful mechanics, or artizans of some kind; for in the latter case they may become prosperous manufacturers, but in the former they may probably be servilely poor all their lives, and die prematurely into the bargain. We shall soon be an educated nation, and we should above all see that the increased intelligence is rightly directed. The tendencies are unquestionably to avoid producing wealth, and to participate in its distribution. The factories and workshops—the real sources of wealth—are too often regarded as beneath the attention of persons whose parents have prospered therein. I beseech everyone having the custody of children to see that the education they possess is directed to the manipulating and fashioning of the products of the earth for the use and enjoyment of man, and not to the counter and quill-driving. Of course there must always be clerks and assistants, and I have no fear of the supply ever being inadequate to the demand. There are, however, grave reasons why the energies of young persons should be directed into healthier and more profitable channels.

#### A GLARING CONTRAST.

I have often thought that it must be very aggravating to the shop assistant to know that the majority of the working classes enjoy short hours and a weekly half-holiday whilst he is boxed up behind the counter. The contrast is great. The mechanic or artizan works on an average nine hours a day, and has a full half day to himself every week. He can attend meetings or classes, or do anything he feels inclined to do at a reasonable time, but the shop assistant works from twelve to fifteen hours a day—is deprived of all social and educational advantage, and instead of enjoying a half-holiday has half a day



added to the already long hours. The difference in the two conditions becomes more apparent if the hours are summarised. The mechanic or artizan works, as a rule, fifty-four hours a week, the assistant seventy-five to ninety hours a week. Assistants whose hours are twelve and a half a day on five days of the week, and fourteen on a Saturday, work fifteen weeks in every year more than the majority of the working classes work. Assistants whose hours are thirteen and a half a day on five days of the week, and fifteen and a half on a Saturday, work about twenty-one weeks (of six days a week of nine hours a day) longer than the majority of the working classes work. The majority come under the last category. Shop assistants thus labour seventy-three weeks in every year, whilst the mechanic or artizan works only fifty-two. The system I am endeavouring to expose thus filches from the young men and women behind the counter twenty-one weeks of overwork in every year—without, I believe, any of the overtime being paid for. I merely mention this in passing, because, as previously stated, my object is to protect the health and strength of assistants, and not to fill their purses, but it is only right that the public should know that in the majority of instances there is no compensation whatever for all the bodily weariness and suffering resulting from twenty-one weeks of overwork. If, however, they had a guinea an hour it could not possibly compensate them for the physical deterioration which they suffer. Money is no solace to either employers or assistants for a broken down constitution or an early grave. The knowledge of the marked inequality which I have just indicated should act as an incentive to increased enthusiasm on the part of the employers and assistants in this early closing crusade. What stores of health, knowledge, and happiness might be obtained in the twenty-one weeks of imprisonment thus unnecessarily spent behind the counter! Cheeks would glow with health, sad pale faces would disappear, latent talent would be cultivated, and in fact the world would become bright and cheerful to the shop assistant. We should find the young men enjoying manly sports, attending lectures or improvement societies, and generally becoming useful members of society. The young women would not then despise their lot—they would be happy because healthy—contented because not overworked, and their chances, in consequence, of making suitable matrimonial alliances would be considerably



improved. As to the employers, although apparently they might at first experience a slight pecuniary loss, they would gain in the end, because all the extra energy resulting from healthy conditions would be devoted to their interests. A weary body cannot wear a smile without displaying some mark of discontent, nor can a sad heart be eloquent in a service of oppression.

Shop assistants never had a better opportunity of emancipating themselves than they now have. An organisation is formed, around which vast numbers are rallying. It is patronised and supported by many eminent men and leading traders, who without doubt can do a great deal, but those who suffer must themselves make an effort if they wish to enjoy their natural rights. There should be no apathy or indifference. The end should be kept steadily in view, and every legitimate means should be exerted until it is attained. There are employers who do not scruple to use their power to crush every spark of independence out of their employés, but it should be the aim of every assistant to cultivate a manly spirit of self-reliance in spite of all opposition. Respect and obedience, of course, is due from employés to their employer, and let no one suppose that I wish to create dissension between them. My aim is to create a mutual respect for each other's rights and obligations, so that a well-defined line may be drawn between that which can properly be bought and paid for and that for which a mine of gold would be inadequate compensation. No effort should be spared to help on any association whose objects are purely persuasive, for although I advocate legislation I respect the efforts and motives of those who decry state interference. Ever since my connection with the Early Closing Movement I have always done what I could to help any and every association. My aim is not to glorify or condemn any society, but to preach the doctrine of humanity and reasonable relaxation for the benefit of those who are overworked. I am bound, however, to confess that, in my opinion, the Shop Hours Labour League is the only association which embodies the sentiments of the majority, because its objects are to encourage lawful combination, to use the power of persuasion as much as possible, and where private effort fails, to supplement it by legislative force. During the past two years I have addressed upwards of 150,000 employers and assistants, all of whom approve of



legislation. Considerable enthusiasm has been created, many employers and assistants in consequence have obtained, at all events, a temporary weekly half-holiday, but even that short period of weekly leisure has been taken away by the action of the selfish minority, whose tactics I have already described. All faith in purely persuasive effort has again been rudely shaken. It is, however, simply a repetition of what has taken place over and over again for the last quarter of a century. Those concerned have therefore resolved to be trifled with no longer by a system which has played them false so often. The shop assistants, together with vast numbers of employers, with one voice demand State protection on the lines I have indicated. There is nothing to excuse or justify further delay. Constitutions are being ruined, and young lives are daily being sacrificed. If an explosion in a mine suffocates a number of pitmen, or a railway accident maims or kills a few passengers, or if a collision at sea sweeps away two or three hundred lives, a national moan of sympathy goes forth, and all kinds of expedients are properly suggested to prevent the recurrence of such catastrophes. Yet although thousands of lives are sacrificed every year, and thousands more contract all kinds of disease and become physically unable to work through the long hours and standing, the nation callously pursues its course without even an expression of sympathy.

#### REALISE AN INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY.

This immense sacrifice of life and health surely concerns the commonwealth, for the process of decay extends in almost every direction with the increase and centralisation of population. The industrial life of the nation seems to be in a transition state. Streams of fresh vigorous life are continually being poured into the large towns, only to be contaminated with deteriorating influences. If this process continues the rural districts will speedily be depleted—pure country life will be a thing of the past, and the great proletariat will assume dangerous proportions. It should be one of the first aims of everyone who pretends to a concern for the public welfare to render the conditions of labour healthy, and to regard as sacred the temple of the human body, for as physical strength is the source of national greatness, so is physical decay the forerunner of national dissolution. To some, the conditions



of shop labour may seem of small importance, but I would remind such persons of the number, intelligence, and respectability of those concerned, and the great exertions of which they are capable in time of national need. If, however, they were an insignificant, ignorant, and depraved class, the obligation of the State to emancipate them would be all the stronger, because I hold that a wrong is a wrong—and should be remedied by the State—whether it is inflicted on a peasant or prostrates a community. We all share a common responsibility for the national ills. Your strength is my strength, my weakness is your weakness. Our frailties and virtues do not concern ourselves alone, but extend their influence in ever widening circles, until the whole community has directly or indirectly been more or less affected. Nothing can be isolated, small rivulets of habit and custom flow from every locality, and converge in the great ocean of national life. It is ours to make it pure or impure. Almost everyone inclines to do the former, professing a desire to alleviate the suffering and to increase the happiness of the world. This, however, can only be done by realizing a personal responsibility and by persistent individual effort. The health and happiness of shop assistants should be as much your care as it is mine. You may not hitherto have known of the existence of the physical hardships which I have endeavoured to point out. But that is your excuse no longer. I have placed you in possession of the facts. If you sympathise—transform your sentiment into practice, and help the Shop Hours Labour League or any similar movement in any way you can. You will then have the satisfaction of knowing that you, at least, have endeavoured to strengthen the bodies, improve the minds, and brighten the lives of our brothers and sisters behind the counter.







# THE TESTIMONY

OF

SHOP ASSISTANTS, RETAIL TRADERS, MINISTERS  
OF RELIGION, AND DOCTORS,

AS TO THE

*CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF OVERWORK  
IN SHOPS AND WAREHOUSES.*

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Ye build ! ye build ! but ye enter not in,  
Like the tribes in the desert devoured in their sin ;  
From the land of promise ye fade and die,  
Ere its verdure gleams forth on your wearied eye.

MRS SIGOURNEY.



THE TESTIMONY

OF ASSISTANTS, RETAIL TRADERS, MINISTERS  
OF RELIGION AND DOCTORS

TO THE COMMITTEES OF SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
ON THE MURKIN CASE

THE TESTIMONY OF THE ASSISTANTS, RETAIL TRADERS, MINISTERS OF RELIGION AND DOCTORS TO THE COMMITTEES OF SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ON THE MURKIN CASE. PUBLISHED BY THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RETAIL TRADERS, 1910.



## THE EVIDENCE.

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I COULD fill an immense volume with the details of thousands of cases of illness, disease and death resulting from the over-work in shops and similar places. I trust, however, that those already given, together with the following, will be found sufficient to satisfy even the most critical. If any point remains obscure it will afford me much pleasure to explain it or answer any questions relating to the subject generally. I shall also be glad to hear from anyone who can add in any way to the evidence, or render me any assistance or information whatever.

### WHAT FEMALE ASSISTANTS SAY.

S. E. E, age 30, draper's assistant. I have been at business about nine years, and during that time in six situations, viz., at Marchmont Street, Burton Crescent, two and a half years; Hoxton, twelve months; Kensington, sixteen months; Peckham, one and three-quarter years; Islington, five months; Commercial Road, three years. In all these places I have commenced business at 8.30 A.M., and worked until 9.30 every day, except on Saturdays, when it invariably has been 11.30 to 12 P.M.; although in Kensington I got away earlier on a Saturday. I always had breakfast before commencing work. The time allowed for dinner and tea is twenty minutes for each meal, sometimes a little more, but more frequently less. Several times during my experience I have been obliged to go home to recruit my health, which is continually breaking down entirely through the long hours and constant standing, although I have a pretty good constitution, or could not have stood it so long as I have. I feel completely exhausted long before Saturday night, and it requires a great effort to get to church on a Sunday morning. I have no chance of reading or attending lectures, or taking exercise. I have during my experience known several obliged to give up through ill-health. Where I am now one young lady has given up this week; another has just returned, still feeling and looking unfit for business. I have no half-



holiday, although in some places we have had it for a few weeks. It was a great relief.

H. F., draper's assistant, age 21. I am at Stratford. This is the only house I have been in, and I have been here five years. We begin at 8 A.M., and leave off at from 9.30 to 10 P.M. on every day, but on Saturdays it is generally 12 P.M. before we finish. We have about fifteen minutes for breakfast and tea, and twenty minutes for dinner. I was never a very strong girl, and I feel tired out long before the end of the day, as if it is a trouble to do anything. I have no time to think of anything but my work. I should like to read or take a walk with my friends, but cannot do so except on a Sunday afternoon. There are thirteen of us—seven males and six females, eight under twenty years of age, and five over twenty years of age. Since I have been in the trade I have known of two deaths through the long hours and standing. A few hours a week less or a regular half-holiday would make our lot more endurable.

Agnes M., Edinburgh, draper's assistant, age 21. I left Scotland and took a situation at Deptford, and remained there four months. I was obliged to return to Scotland as I could not endure the long hours. Where I am now I work from 9 A.M. to 8 P.M., but in London I worked from 8 A.M. to 9.30 and 10 P.M., and on Saturdays until 12 P.M. I was in perfect health until I went to London; but the long hours soon took me down, and I was glad to get back to Scotland. I used to be too tired to sleep, and often felt almost fainting away before time to close. I seldom was able to get to church on Sunday morning. I lived in the premises. There were thirteen of us—half under twenty years of age. All the females complained and suffered more or less. One, during my short stay, left because unable to stand through having swollen legs.

Emily T., age 22, florist's assistant, High Street, Nottinghill. I begin work at 7.30 A.M. and leave at 9 P.M., frequently as late as 10 during the season. On Saturdays it is generally between 10 and 11 P.M. when I leave. Half-an-hour is allowed for each meal. I get quite tired out long before the end of the day, and very much exhausted on a Saturday. On Sundays if I were to consult my own feelings I should seldom go to a place of worship, I feel so weary. I often long for exercise and fresh air. I have quite given up lectures since I have been in a situation, and as for reading or cultivating my mind I never have a chance except on a Sunday. I sleep at home. There are in this place eight females and twelve males, three females over twenty, and five under. It is considered a great favour to be let off at 7 o'clock even once in three months. I do not know any cases of death, but I have known several assistants whose strength and health have been lowered and weakened.



If the hours were more reasonable I could do my work much better.

M. E., age 23, draper's assistant. I have been three years in Lewes and two years at New Cross. At Lewes I worked from 8 A.M. to 8 P.M., Saturdays until 10.30 P.M. At New Cross the hours are from 9 A.M. to 9.30 and 10 P.M., Saturdays 9 A.M. to 11.30 P.M. At Lewes I had an hour for dinner and half-an-hour for tea. At New Cross I have to devour my meals as quickly as possible, so as to get back to the counter. I was in good health when I first went to business, but now I am weak and much thinner. In my present situation I am so weary on a Sunday morning that I could rest and sleep the whole day. I live on the premises. There are six females and three males, only three over twenty. We used to close at 5 o'clock on a Thursday, but only for a very short time. I felt it quite a relief to get away even in one day at 5 o'clock. I knew a young person who came from the country to business in London. She complained from the first of the effects of the long hours upon her. She died in six months, and the doctor said that if she had not come to London to such overwork she might have lived to be an old woman. I am quite sure that we should have had the weekly half-holiday longer than we had, if it had not been for two shopkeepers who put their shutters up and kept the doors open and the assistants at work. All the others soon opened after that display of meanness.

Annie H., age 21, fancy drapery trade. I have been at Newington Butts, at Walthamstow, and at Westminster. At Newington Butts the hours were 9 A.M. to 8 P.M., and 4 P.M. on Saturdays. At Walthamstow, 8.30 A.M. to 9.30 P.M., and 11 P.M. on Saturdays. At Westminster, 8.30 P.M. to 9.30 P.M., and on Saturdays 10.30 P.M. Meal times average about fifteen minutes for breakfast and tea, and twenty minutes for dinner. I am fairly well in health, but not so fresh as when I entered business four years ago. I get thoroughly tired out before closing time. We used to close at five once a week, but that fell through, and now we leave at 4 P.M. once a month only.

Emily P., age 25, draper's assistant, I have been at Deptford and Old Kent Road. I begin at 8 A.M. and leave at 10 P.M., Saturdays 8 A.M. to 12 P.M. We have from fifteen to twenty minutes allowed for each meal. We are very often called forward from our meals to the shop to attend to customers. We leave our meals half consumed, and then the food is either cold or we get no more. When apprenticed to the drapery my health was good, but it is gradually failing, and the doctor says I am in a consumption. I am therefore obliged to leave at the end of the month. I have never been able to get for a walk except on a



Sunday, as no respectable girl cares to go out between 10 and 11 at night. After the fatigue and worry of the week I am so thoroughly worn out that my only thought is to rest on a Sunday, but it goes too quickly, and the other days drag on slowly. I live on the premises. There are five females only, three under twenty and two over. My own sister is a complete invalid through long standing, and I am about done up. The reason why the half-holiday broke down was because the largest trader said that his trade was different from the others, and he could not close the same day as the others. When he re-opened all the others followed suit. Speaking on behalf of my fellow-assistants as well as myself, I know that shorter hours and a weekly half-holiday would improve us bodily and mentally. Our customers go for a walk of a night, and then come in the last thing when we are pale and fit to drop. Some women wait till the beerhouses close on Saturdays, and then come in to buy finery.

Alice B., age 20, milliner and saleswoman. I have been at Poplar; Old Street, City; Bow Road, and Newington. In all four years. The hours at all these places have been from 8 A.M. to 9.30 P.M., and on Saturdays 8 A.M. to 11.30 P.M. and 12 P.M. Average time for meals, twenty minutes. I was in good health when I first went to business, and I am rather better than usual at present, but I am not well for long together. I should like very much to be able to attend lectures, and social gatherings, and a place of worship, but I could not manage my work at all unless I laid in bed to rest my limbs half the day on Sunday. It is a disgraceful thing to have to say, but I am obliged to be rested for my work or I could not live, and no one would thank me for going to church with a weary and worn-out body. I have known many young ladies suffer through weakness and general breaking down, but we all must stand it to the last moment. I can safely say that we have scarcely a minute to call our own from one week's end to another.

Mary C. C., age 25, draper's assistant. I have been nine years in Kentish Town. The hours are from 8 P.M. to 9 and 9.30 P.M., on Saturdays from 8 A.M. to 11 and 11.30 P.M. I have from fifteen to twenty minutes for my meals, as a rule. My health is good, but I have a good strong constitution, and I have an occasional rest by sitting during the day. I frequently have headaches, and long for a breath of fresh air. I live on the premises. There are only three assistants, two under twenty. I have no holidays. I should be very grateful for a few hours' leisure and rest every week.

Kathleen H., age 20, fancy drapery. I have been at Stoke Newington, Rotherhithe, Ladbroke Grove, Nottinghill, and West-



minster Bridge Road. I went to business at fourteen years of age. The average hours in all the places I have been in, are from 8 and 8.30 A.M., to 9, 9.30 and 10 P.M. ; and on Saturdays, from 11 to 12 P.M. Some districts differ from others by about half-an-hour according to the streets. The average time allowed for meals is from fifteen to twenty minutes. I have had occasional illnesses, but not nearly so much as the other assistants. I do not know what the effect will be in another year or two. What I feel now, being thoroughly tired in mind and body every day long before closing time. I live on the premises. There are nine females and twenty-seven males, about one-half under twenty years of age. In the present situation the females have from four o'clock once a month. We used to close at five o'clock every Thursday, but it only lasted a few months, and ended last October. I had half a day every fortnight in my last situation. I have a sister who is now ill and suffering from the effects of standing so many hours. I have heard the girls complain in every situation I have been in, and have heard also of several cases of consumption, but none of my fellow-assistants have died, although they have had to leave through weakness and swollen legs.

Louisa B., age 19, drapery. Four and a half years at Battersea. My hours are from 8.30 A.M. to 9.30 P.M., and on Saturdays until 12 P.M. As to meals, we are supposed to eat our food as quickly as possible, and then return to the shop. I was in perfect health when I entered business, and so far have had no serious illnesses, but I do not feel nearly so strong as when I first commenced business. I often feel ready to sink down for want of fresh air and rest. Before the end of the day, and especially on a Saturday, I feel exceedingly weary and depressed, and have difficulty in standing until the clock strikes twelve. I am quite unfit to attend a place of worship on Sunday morning. I live on the premises. There are five female and three male assistants, six under twenty, and two over twenty years of age. The other assistants feel equally as faint and bad as I do.

Amy J. L., age 19, drapery. Calędonian Road, King's Cross. I have been in business three years. At Poplar, Hackney, and where I am now. At Poplar the hours were 9 A.M. to 10 P.M. At the other places, from 8.15 and 8.30 A.M. to 9.30 and 10 P.M., and at all 12 P.M. on Saturdays. It is often half-past twelve and one on a Sunday morning before we get out of the shop. Meal times about twenty to twenty-five minutes for dinner, and fifteen minutes for other meals. I was in perfect health when I first went into business. During the last eighteen months I have been away from business three times through illnesses, which the doctors said was through the long hours. I very often feel as tired when I commence business as when I leave it, but feel sure



that if I had a little out-door exercise I should be much better ; and I think it might be arranged for us to sit sometimes during the day when we are not busy. I am always thankful, when Sunday comes, but I am never fit to go to a place of worship until night. There are two of us in the present place, and we live on the premises. There were several males and females in the other establishments I have been in. I have known several like myself laid up occasionally through the long hours.

Emily L., age 22, draper's assistant. I have been in Plumebead four years. I begin business about 8 A.M., and leave about 9.15 P.M. On Saturdays it is always twelve, and sometimes one on a Sunday morning before we get out of the shop. I was in good health when I went into business, and for some time afterwards, but my health has been impaired for the last two years, and I am not nearly so strong as I used to be. The want of fresh air often takes away my appetite for food. I live on the premises. There are four females, three of them under twenty. I have no holidays. We closed for a short time at five o'clock once a week, but one or two men in the place would not close, and so it broke through.

E. M., age 23, draper's assistant. I have been in Camberwell, Hackney, Victoria, and Westminster. Went to business between fifteen and sixteen years of age. The average hours are from 8 and 8.30 A.M. to 9.30 and 10 P.M., and from 11.30 to 12 P.M. on Saturdays. In my present situation we have no stated times for meals. We eat as quickly as possible, and then hurry back to the shop. Never before I went into business did I know what illness was, but since have scarcely known what it is to be free from pain. I have overflowing of blood to the head, which causes me to swoon after standing a long time. I scarcely know what it is to stand with ease for the violent pains in my feet and legs, and more often in my back. My feelings at the end of the day are so dreadfully low and weak that I scarcely have the strength to undress. I never feel thoroughly rested when I have to get up. I live on the premises. There are eight of us, six from fourteen to nineteen, and two over twenty years of age. I have spoken to several of my fellow-assistants, and I find that we are all alike, and suffer from weakness, lowness of spirit, and want of fresh air. We go on from one week to another without anything to relieve our dull lives. The gas is frequently burnt in many shops all the day long, and we are parched up with heated air. I find that large numbers in the drapery trade suffer from weak eyes like myself. Considering the very small salary we receive for the many hours we work, I may almost say that a great deal of it goes to the doctor as soon as received.

M. S., age 23, draper's assistant. I have been in business six years. I am now in the Caledonian Road, Islington. I begin at



8 A.M. and work till 9.30 P.M. On Saturdays it is midnight before we leave the shop. I was quite strong at first, but am not nearly so strong and healthy as I used to be. I get thoroughly exhausted before night. I have known several assistants with swollen legs, and several cases of severe illness which I cannot describe, but they all were caused by the long hours.

Clara W., age 22, draper's assistant. I have been in Hammer-smith, Harrow Road, and in Battersea. The hours vary from 8 and 8.30 A.M. to 9 and 9.30 P.M., and midnight on Saturdays. We are supposed to get our meals as quickly as possible, and immediately return to the shop. I am too tired for anything long before closing time, and feel considerably depressed in spirits.

Martha L., age 24, draper's assistant. I have been at Peckham and New Cross. At Peckham the hours were 8.30 A.M. to 8.30 P.M., and 2 P.M. on Saturdays. At New Cross they are 8.30 A.M. to 9.30 and 10 P.M., and Saturdays 11.30 and 12 P.M. At Peckham we had an hour for dinner and half-an-hour for tea. At New Cross we begin work as soon as finished eating, and frequently we are called away during our meals. My health was good at first, now it is certainly impaired. I frequently faint in business. I get thoroughly exhausted before the end of the day; my feet and legs ache. I have frequently seen my companions fit to drop with weariness and swollen feet, pains in the side, and sick headaches.

Florrie C., age 22, draper's assistant. I have been at Peckham, Edmonton, and Islington. I work now from 8 A.M. to 9.45 and 10 P.M., and on Saturday until 12 P.M. and after. I complain to my fellow-assistants, and they complain to me, and we all know that our bodies are being sacrificed every day. Instead of becoming stronger, our strength diminishes. But we must either work or want; that is the position of the most of shop assistants.

Cecilia A. D., age 24, draper's assistant. I have been in establishments at Kingsland, Holloway, and Islington. My hours are from 8 A.M. to 10 P.M., and on Saturdays 12 P.M. (Corroborates others as to meals.) My health has suffered from the long hours. In one establishment my hours were reasonable, and I felt a great relief. But I have known very many go away ill. (Corroborates others.)

Clara B., age 26, draper's assistant. I have lived in five houses in different parts of London. (Corroborates others as to hours and meals.) Been in business since fifteen years of age. I am blessed with an exceptionally good constitution, and have during my time seen many break down and be obliged to leave the trade. I have stood it very well considering, but the fact is, I am in a good



place, and have not so many hardships as the majority. Everything is very comfortable excepting the long standing. I could mention large numbers of my acquaintance who suffer very much from want of fresh air and bad ventilation. There are forty females where I am now, and about one-half from sixteen to nineteen years of age.

Annie E. D. M., draper's assistant. I have been in three houses of business. (Corroborates others as to hours and meals.) My health is considerably impaired through the long hours and standing. I get dreadfully fatigued and worn out. I knew one young lady who died at twenty-one through illness caused by the long standing. There are thirty females in our establishment—half under twenty and half over, several from fourteen to eighteen years of age.

Lizzie L., age 21, drapery. Been in business six years at Holloway, Peckham, and Hackney. From the first worked from 8 A.M. to 9.30 and 10 P.M., and 12 P.M. and after on Saturdays. One place a little better. We take our meals as quickly as possible to get back again to the counter. I have had a very severe illness through the overwork and long standing, after which I went into the country, and have been fairly well since. The last two hours at the end of the day are the most painful to endure. I feel fit to drop. Everything is too much trouble, and I am altogether good for nothing. There are five females and four males here, and we all live on the premises. About half are under twenty years of age. I have no holidays. A weekly half-holiday and twelve hours only a day would enable us to take exercise and keep in good health.

Emma C., age 19, draper's assistant. Rye Lane, Peckham. My first situation was at 128 Marsham Street, Westminster. I was there for two and a half years. Eight months at Upper Street, Islington. Rye Lane, nine months. In my first situation we were in business at half-past eight o'clock in the morning, and out of business at nine every night. Saturdays eleven to twelve o'clock. Second, half-past eight o'clock in the morning, night nine. During the summer eight, and half-past eight o'clock during the winter. Saturdays, nine o'clock. Third, nine and half-past nine in the morning, nine to ten at night. Saturdays, eleven to half-past twelve. We take breakfast before we go into business, half-an-hour for dinner, and twenty minutes for tea. The same time has been allowed at each situation. I was in perfect health when first I went to business, but at the end of two years I began to feel ill, and had a dangerous illness for six months, but I can say that I feel well and strong at the present time, with a few exceptions. The standing, and for the want of fresh air, certainly makes us feel rather ill at times, and we do think that at least half-an-hour ought to be allowed for each meal. At the end of a day we do not feel



fit for a walk as we should, and on Saturday nights we could often fall asleep whilst serving. As for going to any place of worship, it is quite out of the question. For one thing, I cannot get up in time, I really feel so tired; otherwise, I should always go in the morning as well as the evening. I should much like to attend lectures, for I am most fond of them, but we could not think of that, as we do not get out of business at the time they commence. I live on the premises. There are five young ladies employed during the winter, and about eight in the summer. One young lady is twenty years of age, the others are all under twenty years. We have a half-holiday once a fortnight as a rule, but they have been stopped since November for the Christmas trade, but we commence again next week. I have noticed changes in a great many that I have lived with on account of the long hours and for the want of fresh air, and I know of one or two where they have been obliged to give up business for a time. Evening is the busiest time, and I certainly think that the same business and more could be done in much less time. People know that we do not close till such and such a time, so they do not hurry in doing their shopping, but leave it until we are just about to leave business, whereas if they knew we closed earlier they would come. All the drapers did not keep to their promise, and that caused us to lose the half-holiday.

These witnesses can be corroborated by thousands more.

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#### WHAT MALE ASSISTANTS SAY.

E. W., age 20, draper's assistant. I have been in Oxford Street and Caledonian Road, Islington. In Oxford Street the hours were from 8 A.M. to 9 P.M. In Caledonian Road from 8.30 A.M. to 10 P.M., and midnight on Saturdays.

William B., age 21, boot trade. I have been in Whitechapel and Forest Gate. The hours are from 8.30 A.M. to 10 P.M. Saturdays 12 P.M.

Edgar H. M., age 18, tobacconist's assistant. I work from 8 A.M. to 11 P.M., and until 12 P.M. on Saturdays. Only on three occasions in seven months have I been out before 11 P.M. I came from the country, and had always been used to athletic sports, so you may know my feelings now. I am getting done up, and always feel thoroughly tired. I have to work every other Sunday from 9 A.M. to 11 P.M. Even on the Sunday off I cannot attend a place of worship, as I do not get off until 2 P.M., so I attend once a fortnight in the evening. There are two assistants besides myself. We live on the premises, and all about eighteen years of age. Have



no holidays. Fourteen days is a long time to go without getting a minute off.

John H. R., age 22. Sheffield. I have worked at three houses in Sheffield. In the first the hours were from 8 A.M. to 8.30 P.M., in the second to 9 P.M., in the third to 9.15 P.M. On Saturdays, 9 and 11 P.M. Half-an-hour is generally allowed for each meal, but the establishments I have been in are the leading ones in the town, and I know there are others quite as bad as they are in London. My health has suffered, although the houses I have mentioned are the best. When working on Saturdays until 11 P.M. I feel quite jaded and knocked up, and always feel a miserable dulness in consequence on Sundays. The numbers in the places I have been in are sixty and fifty, about one-half under twenty years of age. We now close at five on a Thursday, but I am expecting it to break through every week, as fifteen drapers agreed to close at first, and now the number has fallen to three, so I expect the other three will open soon. I have known many assistants who have been obliged to go home for rest on several occasions. Afternoon is the busiest part of the day, and the business could all be done in much less time. So long as the shops are open the public will buy.

Henry A. C., age 18, Whitechapel, draper's assistant. I work from 7.30 A.M. to 9.30 P.M.; Fridays, 10 P.M.; Saturdays, 12 P.M. Meals, twenty minutes allowed. I have not been ill, but feel to want fresh air and outdoor exercise. There are five females and eight males on the premises, seven under twenty years of age.

Thomas H., age 17, Goswell Road. Grocer. I have been here five years, since I was twelve years of age. I work the first four days from half-past seven till half-past nine, on Friday till ten, and twelve on Saturday. I have half-an-hour for meals. Feel very tired at the end of the day, and do not feel fit to attend a place of worship on Sunday. I live on the premises; there are six assistants, four under twenty.

Henry S., Rye Lane, Peckham, age 27. I have been at three places, and at Ashford and Oxford. In all my situations the time of opening, or my getting into shop, varied from 8.30 to 8.45, always having breakfast before business; closing at 9 o'clock, Saturday 11 o'clock in all cases, except bank holiday week, when we close later a few nights before. At Southsea we opened at 8 o'clock, closed 10 o'clock, Saturday about 12.45 P.M. About twenty minutes is allowed for meals; the rule is to eat as sharp as possible and get back to shop again. My health now moderate only. At night I feel languid, not caring to eat supper or take a walk, only to get a glass of ale. Saturday night, spun up. Sunday morning, I feel only fit for bed, rise at ten as a rule, and always take a walk;



never to a place of worship in morning. I live on the premises. There are five young ladies and four young men. No weekly half-holiday. Peckham shops closed about two months at 5 o'clock once a week. We got a day once a month. The young ladies suffer the most. I often pity them, the long hours are too much for them, in nine cases out of ten. My opinion in reference to less hours of labour is, that as long as the assistants are not in any way protected by law, the same as the Factory Act protects the employés in factories, we shall always be under the curse of long hours, some of course later than the others. I am glad at the same time to admit that some employers are noble minded enough to study their assistants, without consulting other shopkeepers who live around them, and are living for the last copper, as if fighting against existence and grim death at their doors. Give us legislation.

J. L., Battersea Park Road, age 39, grocery and provisions. I have worked at Mary Cray (Kent), Battersea, and Wandsworth. My hours have been—7.30 A.M., close 10 P.M.; Saturdays, 12 P.M. No half-holiday or time for recreation. 7.30 A.M., close 9.30 P.M., Saturday 11.30 P.M., Thursday, close at 5 P.M. Present place—7.30 A.M. Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday, close at 8 P.M.; Wednesdays, 2 P.M.; Fridays, 9.30 P.M.; Saturdays, 10.30 P.M. At one place I had to be at the Metropolitan Meat Market from 5 to 6 A.M., returning home with the goods, and getting little or no time in the day for meals. Nearly 1 A.M. on Sunday morning before I got away from business, after twenty-one or twenty-two hours on my feet. Altogether unfit to go to worship God on the Sabbath. I live on the premises. Three males—one over twenty, one under twenty.

Charles C., age 34, manager boot trade, Westminster Bridge Road. Been in two places. Hours thirteen a day, and fifteen on Saturdays. I suffer from long standing, want fresh air and exercise. I live on premises. Four persons employed; all male—two under twenty, two above. No weekly half-holiday; have had one, but not having sufficient hands, unable to continue the half-holiday; and it continued whilst others in the road closed on Thursday, but discontinued when the movement failed. Have noticed the effects on fellow-assistants; they are very bad on feet, and look pale and haggard, consumption and other diseases afflict us. The only way I can see to obviate our grievance is to extend the Factory Act.

Arthur Frank H., age 19, Queen's Road, Peckham. Drapery. Went to business at fourteen at South Norward. South Norwood—7.30 A.M. till 9.30 P.M.; Saturdays, 10 P.M. Peckham, summer, 7.30 A.M. till average 9.30 P.M.; winter, 8 A.M. till 9.30 P.M. average; Saturdays, 11.30 P.M. average. I have had very good health, only



feel worn out sometimes. I intend getting a situation in the country the first opportunity. I feel at night as if I had not strength to get up to the bedroom. I live on the premises. There are two males, six females. We have no holidays. We had a weekly half-holiday for about three months. One young lady has left since I have been here with abscesses in the neck on account of weakness, and one with hip disease just lately, also one with consumption.

J. E. M., West Strand. Grocer's assistant. Age 20. I have been in five houses in London. The hours were—7.30 A.M. to 8.30 P.M.; Saturdays, 11 P.M. 7.30 A.M. to 9 P.M.; Saturdays, 12 P.M. 7.30 A.M. to 9.30 P.M.; Saturdays, 12 P.M. 7.30 A.M. to 8 P.M.; Saturdays, 10.30 P.M. 7.30 A.M. to 9 P.M.; Saturdays, 10 P.M. I was in the enjoyment of such robust health as a lad of fourteen, fresh from a country home, might be expected to be. After about six months my health began to decline, and ever since I have been at intervals under medical advice for such complaints as general debility, impaired digestion, and enlargement of the veins of the legs and feet. All these ailments I attribute solely to long standing and the want of fresh air and exercise, which I have never been able to obtain. Great as are the advantages now offered by lectures and classes, I and the rest of my class are debarred from any share in them. I live on the premises. There are ten young men. I have observed the ill effects in many instances, more especially the case of a young man who came from the country; was in London less than two years, and after having been under treatment for several months at the Brompton Consumption Hospital, left London a perfect wreck, and was, when I last heard of him, slowly dragging out a miserable existence, a burden to himself and his parents. I could give full particulars of three or four other cases that have come under my immediate notice. The busiest times are from about 12 to 5. No business need be done after 7 o'clock in any district, in the West End after 6 o'clock. The causes are old custom,—always hard to break down,—want of union amongst employers, and want of sympathy from the general public. I should like to add that I believe firmly, and from experience, that the immorality so prevalent, and so much to be deplored among my class, is in a great measure due to the close confinement and want of exercise attending long hours, more especially when the work is done in the heated atmosphere of a cellar or warehouse. I also believe that what drunkenness there is amongst assistants can to a large extent be traced to the same causes. I would humbly suggest that this be brought, in a proper form, under the notice of clergymen and others interested in religious work, and the suggestion made to them that one of the best methods they could take to remedy this evil would be to give us their sympathy and support.



William H. W., 20, draper's assistant, Queen's Road, Peckham, S.E. My hours have been 8.15 A.M. to 9 P.M., and 11.30 P.M. on Saturdays. I have had fairly good health, and feel tolerably strong at present, but suffer from indigestion from time to time. Before business is over I feel entirely exhausted, both mentally and physically; and on Sunday morning feel too tired to prepare myself for any place of worship. I live on the premises. There are two male assistants—one under twenty and myself twenty. My present employers are quite willing to shorten the hours if the surrounding drapers will do the same.

T. R., Rye Lane, Peckham. Age 27. Grocer. 8.30 A.M., closing at 9 P.M. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday; Friday, 10 P.M.; Saturday, 12 P.M. Have adequate time for meals, but feel greatly the necessity of proper exercise and fresh air. Feel at close of the day both mentally and bodily prostrated. On Saturday, quite worn out. In consequence of close confinement all the week, have no desire to sit in a place of worship on Sunday. Never had the half-holiday. In the case of a fellow-assistant, long standing has resulted in a weakness of the legs.

Henry C., Westmoreland Road, Walworth, age 30 years. Tailor's assistant. I have been in three situations, the first six and a half years, the second six months, and the last ten years. The time at my first situation was from 7 A.M. till 9 P.M., and 11 on Saturdays. The second place was from 8.30 A.M. till 10 P.M., and 12 on Saturdays, and from 8.30 till 1.30 on Sundays. My last situation, where I am at present, the time is from 8 A.M. till 9 P.M., and 11 on Saturdays. I am at the present time enjoying good health. I must confess that I feel very tired and worn out by the time I have done. My feelings are languid and low spirited, more especially on Saturday night. I do not in the least feel fit to go to a place of worship on Sunday morning; in fact, I have been unable to attend any place for over two years. I have no time to attend lectures, only those given on Sundays, which I generally avail myself of. I have never been able to attend any political meeting, or heard any of our great men, only those who have come forward to help our cause. I do not live on the premises. There are employed seven males, and one boy under twenty. I have had a weekly half-holiday since the Thursday five o'clock movement sprang up, but not till then. I have observed the long hours have told on several of my fellow-assistants. I know of two deaths which were due to overwork. One was a young man of twenty-seven years, and the other thirty years. The busiest part of the day is during the afternoon, and I feel certain that the business could be done in much less time. My opinion of the cause of long hours is through the selfish and greedy tradesmen; the bulk of the other tradesmen are forced to keep their shops open much against their



will. The half-holiday breaking down is through a few of the miserable money-grubbers anxious to profit by the majority of the other feeling tradesmen. It would be a great boon to me if the hours could be made twelve a day. I feel certain that not only myself but thousands of others would then be able to take proper exercise, and to cultivate their minds, and make themselves useful members of society. If the long hours of labour could only be made twelve a day, including time for meals, it would put a stop to the Sunday trading, which is a disgrace to a civilized country. I have mentioned that my hours are from 8 till 9, but it is 9.30 before I can leave, and 12 on Saturdays.

J. P. D., Wrexham, age 30, draper. I have been employed at Aberdare, London, Knightsbridge, Tonypasdy (S. Wales), Manchester, and Wrexham. At present, on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, from 8 A.M. to 7.30 P.M.; on Thursday, 8 A.M. to 9 P.M.; on Friday, 8 A.M. to 6 P.M.; on Saturday, 8 A.M. to 11 P.M. The hours in the other establishments were about the same as above. Meal times—Breakfast, quarter of an hour; dinner, twenty minutes; tea, quarter of an hour. I have not had good health after the first twelve months in business, and still feel the effects of close confinement. I have felt the ill effects of long standing and want of fresh air, and shortness of time allowed for meals, more so of late than ever. I feel at the close of an ordinary day tired, languid, and jaded, with no inclination for reading or study. Then comes the extra pressure on market day (Thursday), and Saturday, which knocks one up entirely. I live on the premises. There are from thirty to thirty-five of us at present—fourteen over twenty, the remainder under twenty. We have no half-holiday at present. We used to have one; it lasted for nine months, and was broken, through the action of one tradesman dissenting from that rule. I have observed the effect, and know of two cases in particular; one a brother, the other a cousin, who undoubtedly died from the effects of the long hours of labour; one in London, and the other at Pontypridd, S. Wales. The busiest times are morning from 10 to 12, afternoon from 2 to 7.30. It could easily be done in less time if the public would make a rule of coming before six, instead of coming in when the shutters are going up. They must be served, and this keeps us very often from half-an-hour to an hour later, and I have noticed that the same parties always come late. The long hours here are caused by the want of unity among the various tradesmen to close at a regular hour, and strictly adhering to those rules. I am often under medical treatment for indigestion, am very nervous, and troubled a great deal with headache. A short time ago my doctor questioned me about the time we had to take our meals, and when I told him we had to take them in a great hurry and be called from them very often to serve customers, "Ah," he said, "what a pity you could not have a little rest after each meal,



more particularly after dinner; these hurried meals are the cause of your complaint." I know a great number of young men who are troubled with the same ailments as myself, and undoubtedly they are the result of long hours and close confinement. I have seen many cases of young ladies fainting in the show-rooms, from exhaustion brought on by the long hours they have to stand. I have often wished I had been put to some mechanical or artizan trade, or kept at home on the farm, instead of being compelled to drag out a weary existence behind the counter.

Thomas H., Westminster Bridge Road. My hours are from 7 A.M. to 9 P.M.; on Saturday, 7 A.M. to 12 P.M. For meals, no stated time; about a quarter of an hour for breakfast, twenty minutes for dinner, ten minutes for tea. I think that the time has arrived when long hours should be abolished.

Lanford D., Caledonian Road, age 24, grocer. In four situations. My hours have been—Monday till Thursday, from 7.30 A.M. till 9.30 P.M.; Friday, 7.30 A.M. till 10.45 P.M.; Saturday, 7.30 A.M. till 12 P.M. I feel well and strong now. Live in the house. There are two males—one over twenty, and one under twenty. I have had bad knees from long standing.

Frederick E., clothier salesman, London Road, S.E., age 35. Present situation, six years. Hours—ordinary days, 9 morning till 10 evening; Saturday, 9 morning till 12 night; Sunday morning, 9 till 1. Healthy and strong; no complaints at first; during last two years have suffered a little. Should feel greatly benefited by a little change and recreation, but owing to long hours cannot obtain any. Thoroughly tired out on leaving, and during the few hours on Sunday afternoon have no inclination for anything but rest. I wish respectfully to call the attention of the League to what I consider a disgrace to any Christian country, viz., Sunday opening. How is it possible for a man to enjoy either moral or physical health when working the barbarous number of hours, which men of my class are compelled to? No chance of recreation or enjoyment of any sort. The pleasure of one complete day free from business is almost unknown; and I consider that one of the first objects should be an endeavour to put a stop to Sunday opening.

William F., age 18, draper's assistant, Queen's Road, Peckham. I have been in three places. Hours—8 A.M. to 9.30 P.M., excepting Saturdays, when the time is 8 A.M. to 12 P.M. Meal times—breakfast about fifteen minutes, dinner about twenty minutes, tea about ten minutes. I do not find my health so good as when I commenced. I feel a great deal worse on Sundays than on any other day, which is caused by the extra long hours of Saturday. I live on the premises. There are three or four assistants—some



over and some under twenty. Have no weekly half-holiday. We had Thursday evening for a short time about three months, but the movement fell through, and we now open as usual. I have known several cases of illness caused through the long hours. My present employers are quite willing to close if all the other drapers in the neighbourhood agree to do the same.

Hugh S., Lambeth Walk, S.E., age 24, draper's assistant. I have been in six situations. The hours were—From 8.30 A.M. to 7 P.M. ; Thursday, 5 P.M. ; Saturday, 9.30 P.M. From 8.30 A.M. to 6 P.M. ; Saturday, 1 P.M. From 7 A.M. to 7 P.M. ; Saturday, 2 P.M. From 8.30 A.M. to 8.30 P.M. ; Saturday, 10.30 P.M. From 8 A.M. to 8.30 P.M. ; Saturday, 9.30 P.M. From 8.30 A.M. to 8.30 P.M. ; Saturday, 10.30 P.M. (in winter). From 8 A.M. to 9 P.M. ; Saturday, 11 P.M. (in summer). Having lived in the country until sixteen years of age, my health has kept good. I feel more inclined after business to go straight to bed, especially on Saturday night. On Sunday I feel as though I should like to lie in bed all day. I live on the premises. There are seventeen of us—ten males and seven females ; three males and one female under 20 years of age. I am aware of three, whom I could name, who have been obliged to leave on account of the ill effects of long hours and continual standing.

Charles B., age 30, hosier, Lower Marsh, Lambeth, S.E. In two places. I commenced work at 8, done at 10 o'clock, White-chapel Road. Commence work at 8.30, done at 10 o'clock, Lower Marsh, S.E. Saturdays, 12 o'clock, both situations. Since I have been in business have had two very severe attacks of rheumatism, once for three months, and again two months, but now well. At the close of day feel quite done up, more especially on Saturdays. Do not sleep on premises, but have all meals. There are no females employed here ; males, three under twenty, and three above. Our weekly half-holiday lasted ten weeks only. Not always had one. I have frequently observed the ill effects of long hours on my fellow shop assistants, chiefly arising from giddiness and very severe headache, gas being burnt all day long.

Edgar S., Commercial Road, E., age 23, cheesemonger. In each establishment I have been in, begin at 8 A.M., done at 10 P.M. four days a week, 10.30 on Friday, and 12 (midnight) on Saturday. Have been very queer, and was once confined to my bed for three days, the doctor stating that the weakness was the result of long hours. Am all right again now. Am not nearly so healthy as I was five years ago, and have lost weight from the age of eighteen to twenty-three. I can scarcely describe my feelings of tiredness. On Sunday night all the year round, and every night during the hot weather, I am glad to go to bed immediately the



shop is closed, and do not know what it is to wake until called in the morning to start business again. Until lately it has been a common thing with me to sleep soundly from 12.30 on Saturday night to 1 P.M. or 2 P.M. on Sunday (thirteen or fourteen hours without waking). I live on the premises ; there are three of us, one under and two above twenty. My sister had to leave the service of a West End draper and go home to Margate to be mended again, she having been broken up in two years, from seventeen to nineteen years ; not a day's illness previously. Supposing we obtain simply an extension of the Factory Act, if there be no fine incurred by assistants working overtime, lots of masters will pay their assistants extra for staying on when they should be gone. In case of refusal they will be discharged, and the employers know plenty more are to be had who will be glad to conform to their wishes after being out for some time.

Joseph William F., Deptford, age 30, oilman's assistant (manager). Begin at 7.30 A.M., close at 10 P.M. ; Saturday, 12 P.M. Dinner sometimes in the shop, and have to take it when I get the chance ; mostly it is cold. I live on the premises. There is one about twenty, one under. One more remark, I must state, that there is only one firm in this neighbourhood that keeps the others open, although they have been waited upon, and petitioned by the assistants, but they refuse. Why should us shop slaves work fourteen and sixteen hours a day, and a mechanic only nine hours, and he, as a rule, is "your last customer of a night?"

Ernest A. G., age 22, Clerkenwell, E.C. Grocer's assistant. Only in the grocery. Four years at Lee Green, S.E. ; five years at Bayswater, W. ; one year and eight months at Clerkenwell, E.C. Always commenced at 8 o'clock A.M. and finished at 10 o'clock P.M. On Saturday commenced at 8 o'clock A.M. and finished at 12 P.M. Breakfast, twenty minutes ; dinner, half-an-hour ; tea, twenty minutes. I was in very good health when first I started in business, but did not continue so long, being very unwell for about three months, and am now not nearly so strong as I used to be. I have often felt dead beat up with the long standing, and my poor legs have swollen much through it. My mind and body get thoroughly worn out, and I soon find my way to my bed when I leave the shop, Saturday night particularly so, and never feel inclined to attend any place of worship, having no heart to do so. We never know what time to call our own, having to work often and often up till eleven o'clock at night. Have always lived on the premises and expect to do so. Six persons employed ; males, three under twenty, and three above. Never had a half-holiday, never expect to get one. Only holidays we get are Bank holidays, Christmas Day, Whitsunday, Easter Monday, and Good Friday. I have known a great many bad effects from the long standing and long



hours. Young fellows come up from the country looking the picture of health, and in about six months' time they fade away, looking more like corpses than healthy young men, what they were once. In fact all their spirit is knocked out of them. Why does not the Legislature bring us under the Factories Act, so that our masters could only compel us to work twelve hours a day? We should feel better, should work better, and give better satisfaction to customers and our masters. I have often gone to my bed and wondered what there was to live for. Work, work, work from Monday morn till Saturday night, in fact Sunday morn, all to satisfy the cravings of grabbing masters who are flesh and blood like ourselves: when they get to the next world they will have something to answer for. A crossing sweeper's is much more preferable than our existence, it is in my opinion.

M. W. H., Commercial Road, E., age 18, draper's assistant. Apprenticed and assistant at Commercial Road four years. Begin business at 8 o'clock and close at 9 P.M., and leave the shop between 9.30 and 10 o'clock, and on Saturdays we close at 10 o'clock, and leave between 10.30 and 11 o'clock. Twenty minutes allowed for breakfast, half-an-hour for dinner, and twenty minutes for tea. When I first went to business I was very strong and healthy, but now I am not nearly so strong, and am often troubled with headache and symptoms of weakness. At the end of my day's work I am too fatigued for any healthy exercise, and feel only fit to go to bed. On Sunday morning I feel too tired after Saturday night's work to go anywhere till late in the day, but I have not felt equal to attend a place of worship on Sunday for many months. I have no time to attend any lectures or meetings of any kind or to read and cultivate my mind; by the time I get out it would be time almost to return. I live on the premises. The average number is between thirty-five and forty, and about half of them are under twenty, and about half above. We have a weekly half-holiday, and we commenced it in 1882 and it has continued ever since. Even the most careless observer can see the effect of long hours in our faces. We have a man in our establishment who was at one time well formed as other men, but owing to years of excessive drudgery and long hours of labour he is reduced to little more than a walking skeleton, his weight being under seven stone, and, had he had reasonable hours of labour and a little recreation, we have every reason to believe he would have been a better man than he is now. I think if the hours of labour were reduced to twelve a day it would save young men from going to the public-house. And our volunteer regiments would never be at a loss for recruits, but now we cannot join, however much we wish to do so.

Danl. D. R., Bow, E., age 23, hosier. I have been at two situations in Liverpool; one twelve months, the other three years.



My hours have been from twelve to thirteen a day, and sixteen on Saturdays. The time allowed for meals averages twenty minutes. I was in good health when I first went to business. I've had several attacks of illness since, brought on through confinement indoors. At the present time I don't feel as I ought to now. When I leave business I don't feel inclined for anything, but make home and go to bed from the effects of the past day. I feel a sensation of inability to breathe through the close confinement and gas, and altogether quite worn out, and more especially on a Saturday night. On Sunday mornings I am obliged to stay in bed till about 10.30 through fatigue, and am not able to go to the morning service. I sleep off the premises. There are about twenty hands, all male; four of the number are under twenty years. I had a half-holiday once a fortnight in Liverpool, and in my present situation we have it once a week. I've noticed marked effects in one situation I was in. There were three young men had to leave and go home; one of them, I believe, was in consumption. We find the busiest part of the day between six and nine, and after we close we often have to serve customers. There is no doubt business could be carried on in much less time and with as much advantage, as the people would come earlier if they knew we closed earlier. The cause of long hours is through one shop trying to outdo the other in keeping open, which would never be settled unless by the present movement. Through a few small fire-eating shops, and through serving customers while the other shops closed, the loyal shops were by their conduct obliged to open.

Oliver C. W., Caledonian Road, age 25, grocer's assistant. I have been at Addlestone, Surrey, and two places in London. Began business 8 A.M., left 10 P.M. daily. From 8 A.M. till 12 P.M. on Saturday. Same at present. Half-an-hour allowed for each meal. I was in perfect health at first. My health has been fair, but owing to long hours, I do not now feel well and strong. The long standing has brought on excessive weakness, sometimes feeling almost suffocated for the want of fresh air. The time for meals I have no cause to complain of. I feel extreme fatigue in body, producing headaches and giddiness. I have seen them repeatedly "tired-out" both in body and mind.

William M., age 23, Goswell Road, St Luke's. Grocer. I have been at Bingsfield Street eight years, Goswell Road four years. Five years from 5 A.M. till 10 P.M. the first five days, and till 12 on Saturday. Three years, same place, from 7 till 10. Four years from 7.30 till 9.30 the first four days, 10 on Fridays, 12 on Saturdays. In my last situation I had what I could get; where I am now we get a fair time allowed. Feel tired every night, but on Saturday am done up altogether. On Sunday morning I am too tired to go to church, so I lie in bed. I live on the premises.



There are six males employed, four being under twenty. No females. I have noticed those under twenty are worn out long before the end of the day.

Carey Morris L., age 25 years, Leicester. Ironmonger's assistant. 1st. I was at Leicester, as apprentice four and a half years, as assistant two and a half years; 2d. Camberwell, London, as assistant; 3d. Bowling Green Street, Leicester. 1st. We began at 7.30 A.M. and closed at 7 P.M.; market day, on Saturdays, 8 P.M. 2d. We began at 8 A.M. and closed at 8 P.M.; on Saturdays, 7 P.M. 3d. We begin at 8 A.M. and close at 7 P.M.; on Saturdays at 7 P.M.; but as I'm travelling now, the time depends entirely on the trains. 1st. Breakfast one hour, dinner one hour, tea quarter of an hour; on Saturdays (market day), dinner quarter of an hour. 2d. Breakfast *nil*, dinner one hour, tea three-quarters of an hour; Saturdays the same. 3d. Breakfast *nil*, dinner one hour, tea quarter of an hour; Saturdays the same. At the commencement of my apprenticeship I was often very much wearied by the long days. Since then I have kept in good health, though extra exertion and hot summer weather have at times been almost too much for me. When in London my feet, though not naturally tender, were often very sore, and ached from standing for twelve consecutive hours. I do not think I remained there long enough to be permanently affected. I used often in the summer time to feel quite tired-out when eight o'clock came, and had no energy to go out for fresh air or a bicycle run. My meal times have been liberal, and sufficient for the purpose. Closing time has always been welcome, as bringing release from the vitiated air of the shop. In London, on leaving I felt in the warm weather just ready to walk home and sit and rest; an easy book or newspaper was quite sufficient occupation. After a busy market day, Saturday night in Leicester had a similar effect. I have always attended chapel twice on Sundays, but it has many and many a time been much against the natural inclination to remain in bed or at home for more rest. Remaining at business till eight entirely debarred me from science classes or school of art. One might study at home, but the energy is wanting. I have never lived at the business. In Leicester, fifteen employed; four below twenty years, eleven over twenty. In London, seventeen employed; five below twenty years, twelve over twenty. All males. In Leicester we did not have one, though it is now the rule for half to be away each alternate Thursday afternoon. In London about a year or more ago, when the early closing movement became so fashionable, our time of closing on Saturdays was altered from 7 P.M. to 5. This has been kept up. In addition, one-third of the employés were free every Saturday afternoon. I know of several whose feet have been made sore and very tender by constant standing. Also some who have been made very susceptible to



colds and draughts by the high temperature of the shop with the door kept closed. Morning, and the hour or two before closing. I am very sure that all the business that it took us in London until 8 P.M. to do could as easily have been accomplished by 7. Dilatoriness in the lower classes will account for nearly the whole of late shopping ; they will always drive off their errands until the last minute. When in London our Saturday closing was altered from 7 to 5 P.M. Those who intended to come could always manage to get there, though it might be put off until 4.45. Small traders and mean, close-fisted shopkeepers dishonourably took advantage of their neighbour's closed shutters to steal a little custom. This they probably obtained, and honest retailers desirous to keep their shops closed naturally could not be expected to allow this, and have the "bread taken from their mouths," so they reopened, and the movement became a failure. I should be perfectly satisfied with twelve hours a day, but consider they should terminate at 7.0 P.M. The weeks are very few indeed through the summer when it is light for even half-an-hour after 8. As all parks, &c., are closed at sunset, assistants are really excluded unless they can leave business at 7 or 7.30. It will be seen by the above replies that ironmongers do not work through such long hours as many other trades, at least I take it that my experience is a sample of the trade. If I have been specially fortunate in being employed in houses where reasonable hours are kept, I can only say that I should have broken down altogether if I had had to work such hours as are kept in the provision trades, &c. Business could easily be compressed into a shorter time. A half-day's holiday in the middle of the week would be a great boon, by enabling all to get exercise and fresh air by daylight. Employers might do very much for their assistants by allowing them a half-day off in turns, so that the shop would always be open though the staff would not be so overworked. If this were more general they could do their own private shopping at reasonable hours, whereas now I am afraid some are compelled to make their purchases after their own places have been closed.

A. W., Leytonstone, age 27, clothier's assistant. One firm, a country town place at Newcastle-on-Tyne. Hours,  $\frac{1}{4}$  to 9 A.M. till 7 daily. My present one is 8.30 A.M. till 9 P.M., Saturdays, 11 P.M. Eve of holidays, 12 P.M. Never get home till Sunday morning after a Saturday night. Twenty minutes and quarter-of-an-hour for meals. I get very tired and wearied before reaching home at night, and one's food does not get time to digest properly. There are about twenty, most part of them under the age of twenty. I have often heard both male and female complain through being obliged to be confined so long and never getting a moment to rest in between ; in fact, when I have been queer, the doctors have always said I have needed more fresh air.



J. M., age 42, draper, Commercial Road. Seven years in Somers Town. Hours, 8.30 A.M. till 10 P.M. ; Saturdays, 12 P.M. Twelve years in Watford. Hours, 9 A.M. till 8 P.M. Hours in present place, 8.30, leave 9 to 9.30 ; Saturdays, 10 to 10.15 P.M. But this is a large house, and the best in the East End. Meal times—dinner thirty minutes, tea twenty minutes. The long hours tell on my constitution. Feel tired and worn-out with the heat and gas and want of fresh air. I get quite exhausted and not fit for anything : obliged to rest all day on Sunday to prepare for the following week. As I leave my home at 7.50 and do not return until 10 P.M. there is no time for lectures. There are about forty assistants—twenty fifteen years up to twenty, and twenty over. The assistants look careworn, two have died of consumption. We have one other case which must end in death, as it is a decided case of consumption. I should say all the trade could be well done in ten hours ; that is my opinion, for there is half the time during the day when we have no customers. Breakfast is usually had before coming in to business. I should say as much work would be got out of the hands in ten hours, as they would work with more energy. By condensing the hours of business, the time would not hang so heavy ; we should have more energy to get through with our business. I have seen in the summer months, say in June, July, and August, in the middle of the day when hot, out of twenty-five assistants not one of them with a customer to serve. In the evening, when you want to get out, shop quite full, not able to get away till ten and quarter past.

Walter G., age 28, bootmaker's assistant, Southsea, Hants. I have been in three places town and country. The hours are from 8.30 to 9.30, and on Saturdays to 12 P.M. ; 8.30 to 9.30, and Saturdays 11.30 ; at present place, from 8 A.M. to 9.30 P.M., Saturdays to 11 P.M. Was in perfect health at first, but got very weak owing to the confinement. I feel the want of fresh air and exercise. I do not live on the business premises. One female and one boy employed, the female over twenty. I have never had a weekly half-holiday. Have noticed the weakening effects of the long hours upon my fellow-assistants. I consider my case an easy one compared to the majority ; but having worked as a mechanic as well as an assistant, I can speak from experience as regards the difference between the two. An assistant does not work harder than a mechanic, if as hard, but the work is drawn out, as it were, to a protracted number of hours, which, in my opinion, is quite unnecessary ; and I know that most assistants would gladly work hard for a few hours to procure more liberty and less confinement.

William D., age 23, Deptford, Kent, grocer and provision dealer. I have been in several situations in different parts of London. Have



always worked from thirteen to fourteen hours a day, and sixteen on Saturdays. I was strong, and never knew what a day's illness was before I went into business. I had moderate health for the first four years, and since that time I have been constantly ill. At the present time I am very unwell, and feel very tired and ill towards night, and am under medical treatment. I do not feel ill effects from long standing, but I do for the want of fresh air and exercise, which I only get on a Sunday and Bank holiday. But on Saturdays and Sunday morning I feel extremely weak and tired, and usually lie abed till after church time, because I have been to church and find it impossible to follow the service. I feel so tired and sleepy, so I have given up the morning service entirely. I live on the premises; there are three employed here, two under twenty, one over twenty. We had the Thursday closing at five o'clock for three months last year, from March till June, but after that time we still keep open till 10.30. I have observed the effects of long hours in several cases, one especially; A friend who lived with me at ——. After he left there, he went to ——. He went from there to the hospital, and died of consumption. It was said that the cause was the hard work and long hours we had. At Christmas time we usually work nearly all night for three or four weeks before Christmas, which I have noticed has been the cause of some of the men being laid up.

Alf. V., age 21, oilman. I have been in four situations, and I do not remember to have commenced later than 8 in the morning. At one place I left off at 9. I am now working till 10 o'clock five days, and 12 o'clock on the sixth. In one place I was allowed one and a half hours per day, but in all the others and at the present time I have to get my meals as best I can, and serve at the same time. I have had fairly good health. I am often troubled with lowness of spirits, which I attribute to the want of fresh air. I generally am so tired that I am only fit to go to bed, and I sleep till 11 or half past on the Sunday morning, so am unable to attend a morning service.

Richard R., Cannonbury. Grocer's assistant. I have been in five different shops in London, and have stayed at them from nine months to two and a half years. In some of them we have opened at 7 and closed at 9, and on Saturdays closed at 12, but where I am now living we open at 7 and close at 9, on Saturdays close at 10.30, and some I have been in we have opened at 8 and closed at 9.30, all of which I consider very long hours. In most houses of our trade, young men are boarded and lodged in the house, and the average time for meals is twenty minutes, but I have known one exception to that where we have been allowed half-an-hour for each meal. Where I am now living we are out of the house; we have only half-an-hour, and have five minutes each way to walk, which



leaves us about the same time to get our meals. I was in good health, and enjoy very good health now. The long standing I find the worst, as on boards it makes my feet very tender, and gives me corns on the ball of the foot. The mind and lectures we have not time to think about, and I don't know the day or time when I have attended to either, not since I left school. I live off the premises. There are eight of us employed, four over and four under twenty, and two of them have half-an-hour's walk to business. I have never been used to a weekly half-holiday; have generally had one about once a month, and sometimes not so often as that. I have often observed that so much confinement causes young men to indulge in too much drink when they do get out, as they get so parched and exhausted. The thing of which I think there is the most dissatisfaction caused in our trade is the bad accommodation for young men living in the house, for after the shop is shut at night, you have in nine cases out of ten to sit in the kitchen (and those some of the worst) or go to bed, that is, if you do not feel disposed to go out, which after fourteen hours work you don't feel inclined to do, and even if you do, you have not time to go far, and it sometimes ends at a public house for the want of something better, there not being time to join an institute, as, had shop assistants more time, they otherwise would do.

E. K., Peckham Rye, S.E., age 22, grocer. (Corroborates others as to hours being eighty to eighty-five a week.) The average time for meals is about twenty minutes. I sometimes feel very tired and not fit for work after standing from thirteen to sixteen hours per day. I get a little fresh air, and about half-an-hour allowed for meals now. This has not always been the case. At the end of the day I am mentally and bodily tired. I do not care to read very often, so there is a lot of time wasted. I live on the premises. There are four, all under twenty, with the exception of myself. I know two or three young men who have been obliged to leave the trade through not being able to stand the long hours. Not only long hours do assistants have to put up with. In some places they are not properly fed. I was in one place only twelve days, and had to find all my own provisions, as some of the food wasn't fit for man to eat.

George S., Brixton, age 24, tailoring and outfitting. I have been at Bridport five years; Commercial Road, E., one year; Shoreditch, E., one year; Brixton, S.W., two years. Bridport hours, 9 to 7; Saturdays, 9 to 8. Commercial Road, 8 to 9.30; Saturdays, 8 to 12 and 1. Shoreditch, 8.30 to 9 and 10; Saturdays, 8.30 to 12 and 1. Brixton, 9 to 9; Saturdays, 9 to 10. Various; depends on state of trade, but as a rule, outdoor, forty-five minutes dinner, and thirty tea; indoor, about fifteen dinner, and ten tea. Sometimes more time was given for meals than at others, but we often leave our



dinners to serve a customer, and when we get back find it swept away or else cold. In perfect health when I entered business, and cannot complain now of really bad health, but certainly cannot say that I am in such good state of health. Do not feel any ill effects of long standing, but from want of exercise, and certainly must complain, not of inadequate time for meals, but the irregular times we take them. We leave off too late for lectures; the reading and cultivation of mind (what little) has to be done after 10, and often in bed. I have noticed evil effects of long hours to a great extent among young ladies and boys in desks. I know young men in the grocery trade who have had to return to their native town, and one where the doctor has ordered outdoor labour instead of the counter. When employed in the East End I found the boys suffered much. They as a rule entered the business earlier to dust, sweep, &c., so that their business hours were longer even than the adults; and as their age did not exceed sixteen, it came terribly hard. They did not get any holiday beside the Bank, and even on "Good Friday" they were expected to work half a day. Even if only for these young lads, I consider something ought to be done to make their lives different from slavery.

C. C., Bermondsey. Cheesemonger. I have been in various places during last twenty years. Begin at half-past 7 in summer and 8 in winter, and leave at 10, and Fridays at 11, and Saturdays at about half-past 12 o'clock. I should be in much better health if I had more fresh air and exercise. I feel very worn out, and I get up very late on Sunday morning. I have only had two evenings off during the last nine months. I live on the premises. There are two employed—an assistant and myself. One of our managers is very ill, and his brother died through long hours and shop labour.

Amos V., age 25, Deptford. Oil and colourman. Five places. About one and a half to two years in each. All oil shops. My time for commencing on each day has been half-past 7. Close on four days a week at 10, Friday at 11, Saturday about half-past 12 to 1 o'clock at all places. I have to get my meals how I can, having no time allowed, being compelled to serve during having meals. I was in perfect health, but the long hours and over-work brought on Sunday fits. The ill effects of standing so long has caused my feet to be very sore, my legs to swell, and I cannot enjoy any food by not having sufficient time. I live on the premises. There are two males—one under twenty, one over twenty. I have never had a weekly half-holiday. I have known several cases where long hours has brought on different complaints. One in particular I will give. It is a young man who for some time felt the effects, and at last had to give up on account of breaking out of scars on his legs. This lasted for some months. At last



he died from mere exhaustion, according to medical opinion through so many hours' standing.

Albert E. S., age 21, Battersea Park Road, S.W. Grocer's assistant. I went to business at fourteen. I was apprenticed to the trade at Hammersmith, in which I served four years. From there I went to North London, being there two years. I have had several other places, but finding them not suitable I have left. I used to begin business at 7 o'clock in the morning, leaving at 9 at night, and 12 on Saturday. Now I don't commence till 8 in the morning. I was in perfect health when I first went into the trade, but after being in it a month or two I was constantly ill, but I think now that I have got used to it; I am very little troubled with it now. I do not feel any effects from long standing, and I certainly think that if we had more fresh air exercise that we should be benefited both in body and mind. I do not feel fit for anything but bed after a day's work. It is seldom that I go out. Saturdays I am only too glad to get to bed. As I am not bound to, I seldom rise till 11 on Sunday morning. I have no time to attend lectures or anything of the kind. I live on the premises. Ours being only a small business place, we have only four hands. We have two under twenty. I have no weekly half-holiday, neither have I ever had one.

William E., Commercial Road, E. Age 20. Provision trade. I went to business at fifteen. I have been in two situations — one in Gray's Inn Road, and my present one. I used to commence at half-past 7, and leave off not earlier than 10 o'clock, five days in the week; Saturday at half-past 12 P.M. It's much the same as my present situation; commence at 8, instead of half-past 7 A.M. I have had good health, with the exception of one break down for the want of change of air and rest. I feel the effects of long standing, and for the want of fresh air and exercise. On a Saturday night I feel worn out, so I am glad to get to bed, and I seldom get up before midday; and, if I speak my mind, I must say that I do not feel fit to attend a place of worship. I live on the premises, and there are four, including myself, employed—two under twenty and two over twenty. I have no weekly half-holiday, nor have I ever had one. It is a general thing amongst assistants to be very bad walkers, and always ready to take a seat.

Thomas Henry W., Hammersmith, W. Age 31. Cheesemonger's assistant. Mrs T. Webb's, 109 Tott. Court Road, W., about three and a half years, between 1872 and 1876. Since February 1876 at Mrs C. Foes & Sons, 39 King Street, West, Hammersmith. My hours have been at Tott. Court Road—Board and lodged in the house, hours from 7 A.M. till 10 P.M., and 12 P.M. on Saturday. At present place from about 7.45



A.M. to 9.45 P.M., and 12 to 12.15 P.M on Saturdays. I have suffered much from want of fresh air. I get very tired, and no energy left for anything else I might have a desire to do. I have no time for mental culture, and to myself the greatest grievance of any. In the shops I have lived there has been only three or four hands employed; no women. I have undoubtedly seen evil effects of long hours. Spent my school days in Tywardreath, Cornwall, between 1857 and 1866. Remember a number of my schoolmates, after being apprenticed as drapers' assistants in Cornwall, coming to London usually found employment in the large drapers' establishments in St Paul's Churchyard, where several hundreds are kept. After being there two or three years have gone home with broken down constitutions, in many cases to die before they were twenty-five years of age (I could mention some names at the present moment), through the over-pressure and want of fresh air.

M. J., age 23, grocer's assistant, Bermondsey New Road, S.E. Been in two houses, one in Liverpool, one in London, seven and a half years and two and a half years respectively. First four days from 7.30 A.M. until 9.30 P.M., Friday 10 P.M., and Saturday 12 P.M. We must get our meals as quickly as one can swallow them. I have always had the best of health, and feel well at present, both mentally and physically. I live on the premises. There are three employed, all over twenty. Do not know what it is to feel the blessings of a weekly half-holiday; should not object to one. Have observed the ill effects of long hours on the lady assistants in large drapery establishments. The Shop Hours' Labour League is deserving of support in its aims and objects; but at the same time, I think (individually) that if half the energy and time which are being expended on these aims were given to the Voluntary Movement, and public pressure brought to bear in a popular manner upon any refractory and selfish tradesmen, there would then accrue a more lasting benefit, which would soon attain to a public custom, than can ever result from binding the liberties of men by Acts of Parliament. Witness the Sunday Closing Act of Charles II.! Besides, it is patent to every man who takes an interest in matters Parliamentary, that the Government will never make it a Government measure, and it cannot possibly pass through Parliament, I am afraid, otherwise. Perhaps it may in another ten years, when we have the blessings of manhood suffrage, and when the voluntary closing will give the assistants an opportunity of going on the stump to influence voters. That will be when the millennium comes, and this earth is an Arcadia or Adamless Eden.

Joshua R., age 32, draper's assistant. Caledonian Road, N. I have been employed at Caledonian Road, N., Cardiff, Swansea,



Holborn, Walworth Road, and Tottenham Court Road. Country houses from 8 A.M. to 9 P.M. ; Saturdays, 8 A.M. to 10 P.M. Present place of business, 8 A.M. to 9.30 P.M. ; Saturdays, 8 A.M. to 11.30 P.M., sometimes even later. Breakfast, twenty minutes ; dinner, twenty to thirty minutes ; tea, twenty minutes. On entering the trade I was perfectly well and strong, but have not enjoyed good health for the past ten years. For seven years have suffered badly from dyspepsia, which my medical adviser attributes to long hours, confinement, and inadequate time for meals. Feel so tired and exhausted that I can hardly move one foot before the other. Attending a place of worship on Sunday morning is entirely out of the question, and if it were not from a sense of duty I should never go at all. As it is I never feel able before evening. I do not sleep on the premises. Twelve are employed, six under twenty. In all country houses I have had a half-holiday, but not in London. I have noticed frequently ill effects on others, several cases of consumption resulting in death. I should only be too pleased to have the opportunity for mental improvement.

Humphris John B., age 24, draper. Weston-Super-Mare. I have been employed at Fairford, Gloucestershire ; Ashford, Kent ; Evesham, Worcestershire ; Westbourne Grove, London ; Edgeware Road, London. Average hours in each place from 7 A.M. till 8 P.M., and 11 P.M. on Saturdays, excepting the London house, which were 7.30 A.M. till 8 P.M., 2 P.M. on Saturdays ; and my present situation is 8 A.M. till 10 P.M., and 10 P.M. on Saturdays. Meal times—quarter-of-an-hour for breakfast, half-an-hour for dinner, quarter-of-an-hour for tea. Have had very good health, with intervals of illness. My health is very fair at present, although suffer from weakness, that being my reason for taking sea-side situation. At times, Saturday nights more especially, I feel the ill effects, although I do not suffer so much from those causes in my present place as in other houses I have lived in. I feel languid and tired, more so on the Saturday. The hours and labour not being so oppressive in my present situation, I do not suffer so much from those causes as I have in previous places, one especially ; and in that case I did not feel fit for public worship. I can attend lectures here on an average two and a half hours every evening. Had not so much in most of the previous places. I live on the premises. There are ten females, ten males—about six under, fourteen over twenty years. Leaving out work-rooms, which come under the Factory Act. In some instances I have known young people have to give up their calling. For my own part, I know I am not as great a sufferer from long hours as the majority of assistants are. I having always taken great care to avoid those establishments which keep open very late. Had I not done so, my firm belief is that I should not have been here to fill in your paper, as my health would



not have withstood it; and I am thankful to say I have been fortunate enough to get situations where the hours were reasonable compared with the vast majority of late houses. Therefore I can truly sympathise with my fellow-assistants, and I shall always do all that lies in my power to help this great cause, and also a just cause, which in some cases is nothing better than slavery; my firm opinion being that nothing but an Act of Parliament regulating shop hours of labour will prove beneficial to the assistant, and put a stop to these excessive hours of labour.

James William B., age 21, grocery store assistant. Bethnal Green. My hours are 8 A.M. to 10 P.M., and 12 P.M. on Saturday. I feel very much the want of fresh air and exercise. I feel generally tired out, but Saturday night more so. I live on the premises. Manager said he would not fill one of these, as they were for assistants.

Fred W., age 17. Kennington Road, S.E. I have been in Lower Marsh, Lambeth, S.E., two years, Commence business at 8.30 and leave at 9.30 from Monday to Friday; Saturday, 8.30 to 11.30; Sunday mornings, from 8.30 to 1 o'clock. I feel great weakness at chest, I feel the effects of long hours very much, for I am standing from the time I commence business till I leave off, I do not live on the premises. There is one under twenty, four above. I have no half-holiday. I had one for three weeks and never since. I know of three deaths through the long hours and standing.

P. C. S., Upper Marsh. I have been at Westminster ten years; Lambeth, five years. My hours were (1) 8.30 A.M. till 10.30 P.M. (2) 8 A.M. till 10 P.M. (3) 8.30 A.M. till 12.30 P.M.; Saturday, 8 A.M. till 1 A.M.; Sunday, 8.30 A.M. till 1.30 P.M.; Sunday, 8 A.M. till 2 P.M. 8.30 A.M. till 9.30 P.M.; Sunday, 8.30 A.M. till 1 P.M. I do not live on the premises. There is one under twenty, four above.

Samuel K., Westminster Bridge Road, Lambeth; age 36, cheesemonger. At Nine Elms about six months, and several other situations. We did begin at 7.30 and close 9.30. Now begin 7.30 and close 8.30; Friday, 9.30, and Saturday, 11.30 P.M. In my present situation half-an-hour each meal. The long hours broke up my health for a time, but now I feel well. I live on the premises. There are six of us—two over and four under twenty.

Thomas B., Strand, W.C., age 23, grocer's assistant. First place at Canterbury, 9 to 7 (wholesale). 2nd. Ashford, 7.30 to 9 (retail). 3rd. Herne Bay, 7 to 7, winter; 7 to 9, summer. At present, 7.30 to 8.50; Saturdays (except wholesale), 10 to 11. Half-an-hour for meals. For some time health very good, but latterly suffering from extreme lassitude and depression, arising from an



impaired digestion. At present under medical treatment. The languid and heavy feeling one gets as the day reaches its end arises from standing so long, want of proper exercise (and by exercise I mean something more than mere walking in the open air), and so much gas being used in shops in London. I am debarred from all evening classes, although excellent institutions abound, affording every facility for improving the mind. I live on the premises. There are ten males employed in the business. When at Herne Bay we closed at 3 one afternoon once a week during winter. I have no holidays now. I have often noticed the effect of the long hours on my fellow-assistants, both morally and physically. The long standing brings on chronic chest affections, stooping, diseased state of the feet, etc. At present our busiest time is from 12 to 5. As regards the business it is really *nil*, and I am certain does not pay expenses after 7 P.M. Ours is a very old established business, and conducted on very old-fashioned principles, of which late closing is one. I may mention that there are two cashiers in our house who have to start from home at 7.30 A.M., and do not get back at night till 10, Saturdays later, both under the age of sixteen. They are in a little desk all day every alternate week. The effect on their health, although they are very often unwell, will not be apparent till a few years have passed. Our warehousemen, too, are confined in the cellars all day, the only light of which is the gas. I maintain that the apathy of most of the shopmen is due to the fact that after a time the long hours (although the work may not be hard) has such an effect on them, as to make them fall into a certain groove, and from which it is most difficult to rouse them. They take no interest in everyday matters.

George L., Whitechapel Road, E., age 23, grocery. I was in the Borough, and then where I am now. I was expected in the shop at 7.30 in the morning till 9 in the evening; Friday, 9.30 P.M.; Saturdays, 11.30 P.M. I now start business at 7.45 A.M. and finish at 9.30 P.M. up till Thursday; Friday, from 10 P.M. to half-past; Saturdays, 12 P.M. When I first went into the trade I was in perfect health, but now, I am sorry to say, for the last two years I have felt completely broken down, and troubled with sundry complaints, which I attribute to long standing and for want of exercise, &c. After leaving business I feel fit for nothing but bed. As for taking exercise, I am very glad to get home and take my boots off. My bodily and mental feelings at the end of each day and on Saturday night, languid, faint, and melancholy; and on Sunday morning I generally wake up with the headache, and do not get up until 12 or 1 o'clock. I live at Commercial Street. There are seven of us employed in the business, all males, four under twenty and three over. Never had half-holiday. As for noticing the effect of long hours upon my fellow-assistants, I



have noticed it daily, and some of them seem completely broken down.

James H., Jamaica Street, age 28, oilman, &c. In my present place since fourteen years of age. Begin business 8 A.M., close 10 or 10.15 P.M. till Saturday; on Saturday open 8 A.M., get closed about 12 P.M. or later. I can only say that certainly, physically, the confinement indoors, hard work, and the long hours have irrevocably injured my whole constitution. I am suffering from varicose veins in the legs, doctors tell me entirely caused by so much standing, also indigestion, &c. I am worn out on Saturday nights and worn out on Sunday morning, often too tired and too ill to do anything but sit about and enjoy the rest which Sunday offers. I never can go to chapel or church on a Sunday morning unless I make a special effort; am certainly more often fit to be in bed. The last two years I have not been able to attend a single lecture. I live on the premises. I have not had a real holiday since leaving school. I have not had many fellow-assistants in my time. Go to the drapers' at a busy season and look at the pallid faces and drooping limbs of assistants. There you will see my experiences exemplified. The causes of long hours are: natural outcome of circumstances, such as greed, avarice, indifference, custom, competition, and want of thought very often among traders. Improvidence on the part of the large portion of the community, who live from hand to mouth, and who like to trade how, where, and as late as they think fit, provided the shops are open. My idea is that every trader should be licensed, and according to his trade, its nature, and requirements, so should the hours be limited; but no business premises should be allowed to be open more than twelve hours out of the twenty-four, and none, except butchers, poulterers, fishmongers, etc., should be allowed to trade before 8 A.M.

A. E. F. R., age 25, draper, Edgeward Road, Hyde Park. Been in three situations. The hours have not been less than thirteen and fourteen a day, and sixteen on Saturdays. Meal times—Breakfast, twenty minutes; dinner, some places fifteen minutes others twenty, and others thirty minutes; tea, fifteen minutes. When I first started I was in good health. Have had moderate health, but one or two illnesses; but at present feel the want of exercise, &c. I live on the premises. There are twenty employed—five under twenty, fifteen over twenty. Knew one case of death, and that was from heart disease, but the general cases are violent colds and coughs from draughts in the shop. The case of heart disease was, I believe, from continued long hours. I have often thought that if young men and young women were to oppose going into a place of business where they were kept so late at night, and keep the employers from engaging hands as soon as they



like (as is the case now), it would make half or nearly all close at a much earlier hour, but young country men just to get to London will go into any place and at any salary just to get a berth quickly, and to get London experience; and the only way I see to close shops at a given hour every night will be by Act of Parliament, and nothing else, as I have myself tried in Peckham (Rye Lane) to close at 8 o'clock of a night and 10 on Saturdays, but one miserable man of the name of —, another of the name of —, were quite opposed to the movement, and my two days were spent for nothing at all. If it had not been for these two men, Rye Lane would have closed their shops at a reasonable and good time, and that is my experience of inducing people to close by persuasion without compulsion.

George A., St John Wood, age 22, draper. I have been in two places of business. The establishments I have know we have not had any stated time. We go up for our meals and eat them as quick as we can, and then go down again. There are about fourteen a day, and sixteen on Saturdays. I was in perfect health when I first went to business. I have had good health except one week's illness. I do not feel so well as I did when I was in the country. I always feel very tired, and my legs ache. I live on the premises. There are two employed (male)—one nineteen, one twenty-two. I have not any weekly half-holiday. We had the Thursday closing for about two months. I observed the effect of long standing on one young lady in Hackney Road. She very often fainted, and she had swelling of the legs. She had to go and see a doctor once a fortnight. He said it was through long standing. He said she would have to leave, and she did so. I think nothing but legislation will ever get us shorter hours. We have tried moral suasion long enough, and I think we shall get it if we stick to it.

Robert A., London Road, S.E. I have been in one situation, besides the present at Lavender Hill. The hours of business were from 7.30 A.M. to 9.30 P.M. on ordinary days, and from 7.30 A.M. to 12 o'clock (midnight) on Saturdays. At my present situation they are little better, being from 7.30 A.M. on week days and till 9 P.M., and from 7.30 till 10 on Saturdays. At my first situation we were allowed about ten minutes to each meal. Where I am now we are allowed half-an-hour to each meal. On many occasions I have often felt so done up as to feel hardly capable of crawling from the shop into bed, and on Sunday mornings have felt so thoroughly exhausted in mind and body as to feel as though I must spend the greater part of the day in bed, and certainly not fit to attend a place of worship in the morning. I live on the premises. There are twenty-one—nine males and twelve females; twelve over and nine under twenty. I know of many instances



of ill health, and have lived with two young men who have had to quit the trade through bad health, one of whom is not expected to live. Also have lived with a young lady, who is crippled for life through long standing. The ill effects of standing in the shop, the gas, &c., is to be noticed in all the shop assistants, especially in the elder ones—the listless way of moving about and the don't care demeanour. It is no wonder that some turn to drink as the stimulant required, especially when coming out of the hot shop they naturally turn into the warmest place, which turns out to be a public-house, hence the number of broken-down shop assistants there are. I am very glad that there are some men who will look beneath them, and help men and women out of this slavery. The only way to help them is to bring what they want about by law, which your Society is aiming for. Wishing the League every success.

William N., age 35, Brixton. Grocer. Have been in eight or nine different grocery establishments in London. When I first came to London from the country, between eighteen and nineteen, I had to open the shop at 7 in the morning, and close at 10 in the evening, except Saturday, when it was 12. At present commence business at 8, and close at 9, Fridays 10, and Saturdays 11 o'clock, except at Christmas time, when we often work until 3 and 4 o'clock in the morning, commencing again at 8. In fact, I have commenced business on the 23d December at 7 A.M., kept on until 6 A.M. on the 24th; commenced again at 7 A.M., and continued until 12 P.M., and had to catch an early morning train to spend Christmas with my friends (more dead than alive). For meals we have twenty to thirty minutes when boarding in the house, forty to sixty minutes for the married men (outdoors). Often feel very weary, and on a bright day earnestly long for a few hours' daylight to call my own. Generally very tired, and on Saturday nights thoroughly exhausted, so much so that I have often crawled into my bedroom, thrown myself on to the bed, and woke up at 5 or 6 o'clock Sunday morning to take my clothes off, rising later in the morning, certainly not in a fit state to attend church. Have only time to pick up a paper in the evening to see the course of events, but generally fall asleep over it. I do not live on the premises, and there are about seventy persons employed. There are no females in the establishment, and I should think about thirty youths under twenty—making about forty above. Have often noticed that some assistants have been thoroughly exhausted, and in one case the doctor said that if he had stood another twenty-four hours he would not have answered for his life. The last hour is the busiest, and the same amount of business could be done in two-thirds of the time. My opinion is that so long as the shop is kept open will the public find at the last moment that they want something, which a unanimous closing would prevent. In our district one man



spread a report (which was untrue) that he was doing £70 a week less trade since he closed at 5 o'clock, consequently kept open the next week, after which they all kept open. I should like to suggest that all who are employed by the week be paid on Friday nights, as I know many instances where men are not paid until ten or eleven o'clock on Saturday nights, having then to get home in time for their wives to make their purchases, or leave it till Sunday morning. Even in our own establishment, if the man has not time to get home in the half-hour allowed for tea, he cannot give his wife the money until nearly 12 o'clock.

Robert B., age 16, Brixton. Porter. When at my first place I used to go at 7 in the morning until about 10 at night, and Saturdays until 12 and 1; but I left the provision trade, because it was so late. I used to be all right, and now I catch cold by standing out at door attending to the things. I got very bad feet. The doctor said it was with standing too much.

George H., Lewisham, S.E., age 48, draper's clerk. I have known many cases of illness and disease. I lost a brother from consumption, accelerated by late hours. About two o'clock on Sunday morning was his time for getting home. My experience is that so long as shops are kept open, so long will the public come crawling in, hence the excuse of the avaricious employer to keep open later and later, a few minutes at a time. I have known to exist, and is still so, such a feeling of jealousy of employers, that they will even set a watch, and one won't begin to close until the other is half shut up. Consequently the assistants have to suffer for this petty jealousy; and such one-sided policy too, for no equivalent is given in the morning. Such imperious demands are made as regards time, either heavy fine or dismissal if the rule is broken; although this remark does not affect me now, it has done.

John T., Harrow Road, W. Draper's assistant. I have lived in the West of England over four years, in Whitechapel four and a half years, Holborn and Camden Town four years, and Edgeware Road four and a half years. I now commence business at 9 A.M. and leave off 9.15 to 9.30 P.M., and 10 P.M. on Saturday, but the juniors commence at 8.30, and being married I have to leave home at 8.20 A.M. and arrive back from 10.5 to 10.30, and Saturdays 11.15. Have worked from 8 A.M. to 9.30 and 12 P.M. on Saturdays. Have always been in perfect health, bodily, but get to feel the effects of so much standing and walking in the feet and legs. The feelings at the end of the day, especially in busy times, is that you would like to fall into bed and stay there for a week. As far as attending a place of worship on Sundays, the morning is the only time we married men have for doing odd jobs at home, for the comfort of our



families, and the evening we get so comfortable in an easy chair that we have not heart to get out of it, the only rest we have for the week. There are about twenty-three employed, principally females, about one-half under twenty. We get an evening out at times once a fortnight, which we look forward to with great pleasure, from six o'clock, but have not always had that, far from it, and do not get it now in the heat of the summer when most required. I have known young ladies suffer from long standing. Fainting after a busy day or two is very common, besides colds and other complaints brought on from standing in draughts from the open doors. I don't know of a case of death, but have heard of them. The busiest part of the day is generally the last two hours, but it is not so in every case; the business could certainly be done in four hours less time with less expense. The cause of long hours is from the public shopping late, gentlemen's servants coming out after the dinners are done, and nurses and mothers coming out after the children are in bed, &c. The half-holiday broke down from the one or two selfish employers in the different neighbourhoods breaking through, when of course the others follow. I may say that although I consider myself over-worked that I see many in my travels every day a great deal worse, working from 8 A.M. until 9.30 and 10 P.M., and past 12 on a Sunday morning. I have done it myself, but I hope it may never fall to my lot again.

M. P., Plymouth, age 18, draper's assistant. Two years in Gray's Inn Road, and eighteen months at Caledonian Road, and in my present situation. In Gray's Inn Road 7.30 A.M. until 9.30 P.M., in Caledonian Road 8.15 A.M. until 10.30 P.M., and at both places on Saturdays at 12 P.M. In perfect health when I went to business, but have suffered from dropsy and the liver.

M. G., King's Cross, age 20, drapery. Went to business at fifteen. I have been at Caledonian Road, Kingsland Road, Hackney Road. They are all about the same hours, 8.30 A.M. until 9.30 P.M. and 11.30 on Saturdays. I was in perfect health when I first started in the drapery, but have been gradually losing health and strength for the last three years. I am now suffering from weakness and general debility through nothing but long standing, and want of fresh air and exercise. I feel thoroughly tired out. I live on the business premises. There are six young ladies. At Kingsland Road there were twenty-five ladies and one man; Hackney Road, fifteen young ladies, fifteen men, and one porter, all between the ages of fifteen and twenty-five.

G. A. L., aged 22, Battersea Park Road. Grocer's assistant. My hours have been: 1st place, from 7 A.M. to 8.30 P.M.; on Saturdays till 10 P.M. 2d place, from 8 A.M. to 8.30 P.M.; on Fridays, 9; Saturdays, 11 P.M. At present from 8 A.M. to 9 P.M.; Fridays, 10 P.M.; and Saturdays, 12 midnight. On the whole I have had



very good health. Though I enjoy good health, still at times, especially on Saturdays, I feel quite exhausted by standing so long. It is far worse in spring and summer. I very seldom go to a place of worship on a Sunday morning, simply because I am either too tired or too lazy to get down in time to go. If it were not for the Sunday I do not know what I should do ; life would be nothing less than slavery, it would not be worth living. I live on the premises. There are three males employed here, only one under twenty. At no place have I ever had a weekly half-holiday. I have noticed the injurious effects of long hours. Most seem to get used to it, others never. After the Christmas trade, at one of my situations, one of the juniors went home with the ligaments of his ankle given way. Another young man I know is at home now suffering from heart disease, and a varicose vein in his leg ; standing so long, the doctor told him, has been the cause. As to being busy, we are always doing, getting up the stock for Saturday. More is done over the counter in the evening (during the early part of the week) than all the other part of the day, but we could do the work in much less time. This is a very poor neighbourhood ; they buy very small quantities ; they seem to work late, a great number of them, and get their goods just as they are going home. Perhaps knowing the shops are open so late makes them worse than they would be. The cause is the jealousy and meanness of one or two employers in this road ; also, two shops have Post Offices, and they would not be able to close any earlier.

Melmoth Thomas D., Islington, N., age 23, grocer's assistant. I have been at Tottenham Court Road, Great Titchfield Street, and Exmouth Street, W.C. My hours have been : (1) Open 7.30 A.M., close 9 P.M. ; Friday, close 9.30 ; Saturday, close 12 P.M. (2) Open 7.30 A.M., close 9.15 P.M. ; Friday, close 10 ; Saturday, close 12 P.M. (3) Open 8 A.M., close 8.30, leave 9 P.M. ; Friday, close 9.30, leave 10 P.M. ; Saturday, close 11, leave 11.15 P.M. I have had a severe attack of rheumatic fever and kidney disease. I am now feeling well and strong, owing no doubt to my present situation being easier and more comfortable. I did suffer very much with my feet, caused by the long standing, and have felt the need of fresh air and outdoor exercise. When at my former situations I did not feel fit for anything but to retire to bed, not caring to read or to cultivate the mind in any way. I very seldom go to a place of worship on Sunday mornings, thinking rest would be more beneficial. I have not been able to attend one lecture since I have been in the trade, although there have been many I should like to have attended. No one lives on the premises. There are seven young men employed. Six are under twenty, and one over. In my former situations all, without one exception, complained bitterly of the effect of long standing. I know of the case of one young man who was obliged to leave the trade in con-



sequence of continued ill-health, without doubt caused by long hours. I suppose you are aware of the extra work grocers' assistants are subjected to at Christmas time, they having to work until one, two, three, and even four o'clock in the morning (without extra pay), perhaps three nights a week. At shops where Christmas Clubs are held this extra work commences as early as November.

Samuel Frank B., age 19, Bedford Park, W. Cheesemonger. I have been in one place for five years. I begin morning 8.30, leave evening 9.30; Saturday leave 11.30. In average health when first started. Have not enjoyed good health since, and am at present neither well nor strong. I have felt the ill effects of long standing and of want of sufficient exercise, but cannot complain of time allowed for meals. Usually very fagged at end of day, more especially Saturday. I do not live at the business premises. Five people employed—three under age of twenty. Have never had weekly half-holiday. I consider the general ill-health and low moral tone of most shop assistants as resulting in great measure from extreme long hours.

George J., Lower Marsh, E.C., age 27, oilman. I have always followed the above calling, and have now been in the present employ nearly ten years, and about three years with former employer. My hours formerly were from 7.30 A.M. to 10 P.M., but now from 8 A.M. to 9.30 P.M.; excepting Friday and Saturday, the closing hours on these days being ten and twelve o'clock. The usual time for meals, outdoors, breakfast half-an-hour, dinner one hour, tea half-an-hour; but when indoors very much less. I am subject at times to severe headaches. On Saturdays, if I may use the term, I am quite done-up; and as regards Sunday morning worship, I may say it is the 10.45 bell tolling at the church close by that wakes me up. I live on the premises. There are two boys employed, whose hours are the same. I have no half-holiday, but have lived at different parts where it has been tried, but never came to anything. In many cases I have noticed the effect of long standing. In some the eyes have been bad, but in many the legs and feet, that has made them walk as if cripples; and I have heard from good authority that shop labour takes about ten years off our time. As a rule, morning and evening, and about five minutes before closing time, we are busiest; and I am sure customers could and would come if they knew we closed earlier. I cannot think of any other cause than that the shopkeepers do not make up their minds to close, and it will only be compulsion that will do it. The weekly half-holiday falls through for the want of pluck. I should be very grateful for the half-holiday and less hours at the end of the week. I would put up with having no meal times as at present. I should then spend my time to the best advantage, and should be benefited bodily, mentally, and spiritually.



George B., Caledonian Road, King's Cross, N., age 18, cheesemonger. I have been here four years. My hours are—7.30 A.M. to 10 P.M. ; on Saturday, 7.30 A.M. to 12.30 P.M. I was in perfect health when I first went to business. I have had very bad health since I came to business, and it still continues. I live on the premises. There are three of us—two under and one above twenty.

James C., Hackney, draper, age 24. I have been eight years in Scotland and two in London. The hours in my last place were—thirteen during five days, and fifteen on Saturday; in the present place they are thirteen a day, and fifteen on Saturday. The time allowed for meals averages twenty minutes. I came from the country healthy and strong two years ago, since then my health has not been the same. I am now suffering from pains all over my body, caused by the long hours. When I leave business I don't feel fit for anything, but walk home and turn into bed. I feel on a Saturday when I leave that I can scarcely breathe and quite done up, and unable to attend a place of worship on Sunday morning. No time whatever have I to attend lectures, reading, singing, &c. I should only be too pleased to have such a privilege. I sleep out of the premises. Six males in it—four under twenty. I have a weekly half-holiday; we have only had it for about eight months. In my last place there was always some one ill.

Walter H., age 31, Soho, W.C. Have been employed as cheesemonger's assistant sixteen years. The first one ten years, the next three months, the next about seven months, the next one about two years, the next as first hand and manager two years and ten months, and where I am now. The first place we had to be there by twenty minutes to seven, to have breakfast and open shop by seven; we closed at ten o'clock, and twelve on Saturday. Time allowed for meals differ; in some shops where I have been, generally allowed a quarter of an hour for breakfast, same for dinner, same for tea; where I am now, we are allowed one hour for dinner, half-an-hour for breakfast and tea. I was in good health when I first went to business, but do not feel well for long together. I feel the effects of long standing, having very bad feet, so that I can scarcely walk; and have not had a holiday for three years, except Bank holiday. I generally get home about 1 A.M. on Sunday morning, and do not feel inclined to go to church, feeling too tired to get ready. I have no time to do anything but work and sleep. I live some distance away. There are two lads employed here under twenty. I have observed the effects upon others as well as upon myself; they do not feel well, complaining of the want of fresh air and exercise. The busiest time is from 8 A.M. till 9 A.M., and from 11 A.M. till 2 P.M., and from 8 P.M. till 9.30 P.M. We could do the same business in much less time. The cause is late shopping by those who could do their shopping earlier if they



liked ; and want of unanimity by the employers, and lack of energy on the part of the assistants. I should like to have a few hours to call my own to go to hear a lecture. One shop I was at we opened at 7 A.M. and closed at 10 P.M. ; on Sunday we opened at 7.30 A.M. and closed at 1.30 P.M. ; and once a month we took stock on Sunday after closing time. Ours is the only shop in the street that closes at 9.30 P.M., and we do not open on Sunday morning ; all the others do. My governor is in favour of early closing.

H. G. S., King's Cross, age 29. I have been five years in a house at Okehampton, Devon ; twelve months at Bampton, Devon ; at Roman Road, E., two and a half years ; Richmond, Surrey, twelve months ; here, five years and six months. In the country, 8 A.M. till 8 P.M. ; Roman Road, 7.30 A.M. to 9.30 P.M., and 12 P.M. on Saturdays. No stated time whatever, we have to get our food as quickly as possible, and oftentimes called away in the midst of it ; and often spoken to by our own employer, "Never mind the dinner, come and serve the customers." I was in perfect health when I first went to business, but am sorry to say am far from being good now. I feel the effects of standing so many hours without rest very much, and so often wish I could have a few hours in the country, to get a little fresh air and exercise. The time for meals is not sufficient. My bodily and mental feelings are beyond description at times ; I see nothing but shop and bed from Monday morning to Sunday morning ; and when Sunday morning comes, I am only too glad to lie an extra hour, to rest the poor body. As for a place of worship it's all out of the question. No time whatever to attend classes—have not been to a lecture for years, simply because I have not had the time to go. As for reading, it's more than I can do after fourteen, fifteen, and sixteen hours a day. I live on the premises ; we number about thirty—sixteen under twenty. We have not a weekly half-holiday, and never had one. I have observed the ill effects of long hours in many cases, and the effect of standing so many hours, and can give you several cases of severe illness through it—young ladies in particular. We have one young lady in this house, at the present time, ill in bed, and I believe it's all through so many hours, day after day, month after month, and year after year, and she is, if well enough, going home to the country for a change, and perhaps to die. From ten to one, and five to closing time. And my experience has been enough to say, that I am quite sure the same amount of business could be done, or more, in much less time, and we should have a much better heart to do it with. In my opinion long hours are caused through the want of system and proper regulation. Through the want of unity—or, in other words, compulsion. I should be satisfied with twelve hours a-day ; and have not the slightest doubt I should be able to find time to improve my mind, and to attend a place of worship on a Sunday,



which I am always anxious to do, but cannot do it under the present state of things ; and the weekly half-holiday will be a great boon to all of us. I hope and trust that this great work will be closed with a great success, and that our English Parliament will not fail to give us our due as Englishmen.

William Henry P., age 35, Commercial Road, E., draper. I have been at Bristol four years ; Shoreditch, four years three months ; Commercial Road, E., two years ten months ; White-chapel, ten months ; Chelmsford, twelve months ; and Clapham Road one year three months. I used to begin business at 7 A.M., and have, in the busy season, worked till 10.30 P.M. for six weeks at a stretch, but on the average from 8 A.M. to 9 P.M., and 10 on Saturday. One was the shortest hours I ever had, that was 8 A.M. to 7 P.M. four months, 8 A.M. to 7.30 P.M. four months, and 8 A.M. to 8 P.M. four months. What I speak of here is the closing time. Some houses only allow ten minutes for breakfast, fifteen minutes for dinner, and ten minutes for tea ; some fifteen minutes for breakfast, twenty minutes for dinner, and others thirty minutes for each meal. Sometimes I get a headache, which I think is caused by the foul gas, there not being proper ventilation in hardly any of the shops, which, I am sorry to say, are never inspected ; and in some places the sanitary condition is very bad. I live on the premises. There are about forty, according to the season. About fifteen, including apprentices, under twenty years of age. We close at 5 P.M. on Thursday ; it has continued for over twelve months. In many cases I have known bad legs and varicose veins from long standing, and a great many, say full 75 per cent., die before they are thirty-five years of age, and principally from consumption brought on by overwork. Besides the hours there are plenty of other things to put up with—the people's tempers. Then in some places the living is so bad, that to live at all you have to go out and have supper every night, or something or other. I know an instance of a young man having three situations, and leaving all of them on account of the living. I couldn't advise any parent to put a child to the drapery, as it is a most monotonous business, the same thing day after day and no change. I think that accounts partly for so many changes, and also has a tendency to make a man a drunkard, as he gets parched up with the dust and gas, and want of fresh air.

Alfred George M., age 28, Peckham. Grocer's clerk. I have been in the Borough, S.E., and High Street, Clapham, S.W. Seven years in each establishment. The hours are in the Borough—On Mondays, from 6 A.M. to 8 P.M. ; other days, from 7.30 A.M. to 8 P.M., except Saturdays, which were from 7.30 A.M. to 11 P.M. At Clapham, hours from 7.30 A.M. to 8 P.M., more often 8.30 ; Saturdays, 10.45 P.M. I was in perfect health when I first went to



business. I have had tolerably good health, but am certainly not so strong as I could wish to be, or should have been, if the hours had been more reasonable. I am very exhausted both in body and mind at the end of the day, especially on Saturday nights and Sunday mornings, feeling quite incapable of attending a place of worship. I do not live on the premises. About ninety hands are employed; no females. Between twenty and thirty are under twenty years old, and the remainder above that age. I have never had a weekly half-holiday ever since I have been in business. The long hours have had a deleterious effect upon many of the men, especially those employed in the warehouse and cellars. I may further remark that the hours are exceedingly long at Christmas time, lasting from a month to six weeks, the hours being from 7.30 A.M. to 11, 12, 1, and sometimes 2 o'clock the next morning, for which no overtime is paid, and no compensation of any kind being made. I, with my fellow-assistants, are of course, with this system of slavery existing, rendered totally unfit to enjoy the most festive and jovial season of the year; and trust that, by your powerful influence, this gross tyranny may be soon swept away.

Alf. B., Bury, Lancs. Age 20. Draper. Have been in my present situation over three years. Was previously at home in our own shop. Taking the average, it is 9 o'clock each night, excepting Saturday, before we are at liberty, and then it is between 11 and 12. The meals are disposed of as quickly as possible, after which we resume business, there being no stipulated time allowed; and most of the establishments I know, where the assistants live in, work upon the same principle. I was in perfect health when I came to Bury. Have never been away from business on account of sickness, but for the last two years my whole system has been, as it were, continually tired and weary. In the evening I feel anything but what a youth of my age should feel, and the morning finds me with a headache and heaviness. It requires great force of will if I ever engage in any exercise either mental or physical, and on Sunday, although I attend church regular, it is with no real pleasure, as I am thoroughly tired. For lectures and classes I have all the time I can get after 9 o'clock, and I make the most of that, together with Tuesday from 1 o'clock. I live on the premises. Twelve persons employed—eight under twenty years of age; ten females, two males. Have had a weekly half-holiday for six months from 1 o'clock—Tuesday. I know of two females and one male during the last five years having to leave business through consumption in this town. The busiest times are from 10 to 12.30, and from 3 to 5, and 6 to 7.30 or 8 o'clock, when we have most customers. Saturdays we never do anything after 9 o'clock (which the governor admits), still we do not close until 11. Same business could be done in less time. The jealousy of the tradesmen, and the grasping for every penny customer that happens to



have missed their way, is the principal cause of long hours. If the hour for closing was fixed at 7.30 or 8 o'clock, we should be perfectly satisfied, but after that the evening is useless to many who are not fond of reading, &c., and therefore throws out an inducement for them to resort to the public-houses. The public feeling is strongly for earlier closing, and also is the tradesmen's, but the strong jealousy which exists will not permit them to make any arrangements between themselves. Their cry is—"Let legislation fix a time for every one to close, and make it compulsory, then we will be willing to close earlier." All success to the movement and prosperity to the League is my sincere wish.

Walter Smith W., Hackney. Age 20 next March. Draper's assistant. I have been at (1) Wisbeach five years; (2) Bexley Heath, six months; (3) Hackney Road, twelve months. The hours are—(1) Begin 8 A.M. to 8 P.M., close Saturday half-past 10; (2) 8 A.M. and close 9.30, close Saturday 11 P.M.; (3) 8 A.M. and close 9.30, close Saturday 11 P.M. I suffer from bleeding of nose in summer through not having sufficient open air exercise. I am at present taking cod liver oil, so as not to ruin my health. The time is not long enough for meals as to properly enjoy our food. Saturday night weary. I do not feel fit for worship on Sunday morning, but always attend, as I feel it my duty. No time whatever to read, or not sufficient time to attend public lectures, but there is nothing I should like better. I live on the premises. There are thirteen females and eleven males; eight males under twenty, three over, six females under, seven over twenty. I knew one who broke blood-vessel, and had to give up trade because not having sufficient open air exercise. Another had weak eyes through over standing. Doctor recommended two months' rest. A female assistant in Kentish Town fainted behind the counter. Doctor ordered her to give it up, but could not as she has to keep herself, and cannot afford to be out of work. Yes, and would then have ample time for healthy exercise and reading, which we have now very little; and should feel that the employers would not be losers but rather gainers of the short or limited hours in the long run. I also am able to state that my present employer feels that it would be better for both parties if the shops were closed at one stated time, as it is shameful for him to walk down the shop with such pale faces as is, and what is the cause?—long hours and not sufficient time for fresh air. And can we expect our employer to close if his neighbour is open? I say no, as it has been tried.

Harry W. B., Canonbury. Grocer's assistant, age 24. At former establishment commenced work at 7.30 A.M., left off at 9 P.M., Saturdays 11 P.M. Present situation commence at 7.30 A.M., cease work at 9.30 P.M., Fridays 10 P.M., Saturdays close 12 P.M.,



work not finished till 12.30 on Sunday morning. Half-an-hour allowed for meals, in which respect we are exceptionally fortunate over a great many assistants. Health has been very indifferent for two or three years past. I feel sometimes (always on a Saturday night) complete exhaustion, aching head, aching chest, and often semi-blind from the many hours' glare of the gas. Find it impossible to attend a place of worship on Sunday morning without physical suffering, faintness, giddiness, &c. I live on the premises. There are five assistants—four under twenty, and one above. We closed at five for eight months; it has been discontinued since last Whitsuntide.

James E., Bermondsey, age 29, draper. Having served four years apprenticeship with a firm in Penrith, Cumberland, and remained as an assistant for twelve months, after which I came to London, and have been at the above address for eight years and three months. Our hours in the country were from 8 till 7 during the week, on Saturdays 8 to 8, but the apprentices had to go to the workrooms in the busy season for parcels until 10 and 11 P.M. The hours here are from 8.15 until 9.30, and Saturday 12 P.M. In the country we did not live on the premises, and were allowed one hour for dinner, and three quarters of an hour for tea. Here we have breakfast before going into the shop, twenty minutes for dinner and tea. I am very different in health to what I was when in the country. I now get tired out, and on Sunday mornings am too fatigued to get up to attend a place of worship. I live on the premises. We have three males and five females—four under and four over twenty years of age. I have known several cases of young ladies having to leave through ill health, the doctor stating in each case the cause being long hours and standing too long.

J. T. B., age 22 years. Bolton, Lancashire. Draper's assistant. I have been at Blackburn five years, at Bury, at Scarborough, at Blackburn, at Macclesfield, present situation Bolton. Commence business, 8.30, leave business Monday and Friday, 8.30; Saturdays, 10 o'clock; other nights, 8 o'clock. At Scarborough from 8.30 to 6.30, and 2 o'clock on Saturdays. Blackburn, 8 o'clock to 8.30, 11 o'clock on Saturdays. Bury, 8.30 to 9 o'clock, 10.30 on Saturdays. Never had any specified time for meals, breakfast always before the time for commencing business, about fifteen minutes generally taken for dinner, and about ten minutes for tea. I live on the premises. Never had anything the matter with my constitution before I went to business. When I had been about three years I was constantly ailing. I have never had the same health since, although it greatly improved when I went to Scarborough, but have not regained the colour I used to have. After the day's business is over I feel too tired to take outdoor exercise, and very often too weary to write or read. I always find it very hard work to get up in time for church on Sundays. I have no time to attend lectures except by



asking special permission from business. There are about thirty females employed, twenty of them under twenty years; twelve males, six of them being under twenty years of age. I have no half-holiday. I had one in Blackburn, which lasted three months. In Scarboro' we closed independent of the other establishments. I have plainly observed the effect of long hours upon both male and female assistants, and could give many instances. One young man in Over Darwen, who had to leave his situation through ill health, was brought to a premature grave; he was married, and unable to leave to try and get a situation with moderate hours, which would have added to his improvement instead of death. The busy times are from 10 o'clock to 1 o'clock, and from 3 to 7, the same business could be done in much less time. On Saturday we stand doing nothing after 6 o'clock. The cause of long hours is, one tradesman is afraid of his neighbour doing his trade should he close half-an-hour before the rest. The cause of the holiday breaking down in Blackburn was owing to about four tradesmen who would not close, and gradually a few more opened on account of that, until it entirely broke down. With twelve hours a day and a half-holiday I should be satisfied, so would hundreds of tradesmen as well as assistants. It is my opinion it would greatly lessen the mortality of shop people. I am sorry that the matter is not taken up by a greater number of assistants. One reason for this is that they are afraid of losing their situation, and that their employer should say that they took a greater interest in having his shop closed than about his welfare. Eighty per cent. of the shopkeepers I have known in the different towns would like legislation. I might add that when I went to the situation at Bury I was not able to get off the premises from the Thursday morning until Sunday. It was generally after nine when we closed; after that we had to have supper, and then we had to be in by 10 o'clock prompt. The apprentices are not allowed out in the winter months, only to chapel on Sundays from October to April. In the summer months the hours exceed nine o'clock (this was two years ago). I might state that when I went to Macclesfield it was 7 o'clock P.M. when I arrived. I was working in the shop until 11 o'clock, and on the day following (Saturday) from 6 o'clock A.M. to 11 o'clock P.M. I left without salary when I had been five days. I could bear it no longer. I do not complain of the hours we had in Scarboro'. I consider them sensible, but such like places are only to be met with occasionally.

William Samuel R., Southwark, age 20, cheesemonger's assistant. My hours are on five days 7.30 to 10, and on Saturdays 7.30 to 12. I suffer from swollen veins, and bad corns at the bottom of the feet, and bad headache after the gas is lighted. All right on Saturday night, as the trade keeps us alive, but on Sunday morning it is quite cruel, as we have to be down before



ten, or no breakfast ; and when at church often fall asleep. I live on the premises. There are six male assistants, two over and four under twenty years of age. One fellow-assistant suffers from bad veins with so long standing. A new beginner has commenced to complain with the headache, at the age of fourteen years, and has only been in the business six months.

J. M., Hackney, age 19. We open at 7 and close at half-past 9 on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday ; Friday, 7 till 10 ; Saturday, 7 to 12. We go in, and as soon as we have finished our meals, we come into business again. I get very tired and exhausted every night. I live on the premises. There are three—all under twenty.

George Y., Southwark, cheesemonger, age 21. This is my first situation in London, have been here 7 months. In the country the hours were from twelve and a half to fifteen and a half. Present situation they are : five nights in the week, fifteen hours ; and on Saturday, sixteen and a half. My feet ache so that I cannot take exercise after business with any pleasure. All right on Saturday night while the excitement lasts, but when it is over, and on Sunday morning, feel very queer indeed ; and although generally attend a place of worship, it does not do much good, for it is impossible to keep awake. I live on the premises. Six male persons—two over twenty-one years, four under twenty-one years. One fellow-assistant suffers very much with bad veins through long standing.

Charles S., Hammersmith, age 48, manager or foreman of grocery, oil, colour, and Italian stores. My first situation as a youth of fifteen was at Tottenham Court Road. 2d, Islington. 3d, Chelsea. Not liking the long hours and confinement, I left my own trade and went into the butcher trade in Piccadily, remaining in that trade till I was about twenty-eight or twenty-nine years old. I again returned to my own trade, and went to Stratford as counterman for four years. From that I came to my present situation, where I have been for fifteen years. I have always begun business 7 o'clock in the morning until 10 o'clock at night ; Saturday, 7 in the morning till 12 o'clock at night. Counter men and indoor assistants have no time allowed. Supposed to get their meals as quickly as they can, as they are continually called away from dinner. From a boy up to the time of my entering my third situation I always had good health, and was never troubled with the ill effects of long hours and close confinement ; but during the time of my third situation, indigestion showed itself. Leaving my own trade for about seven years, where I had more outdoor labour, my health was good ; but on my return back to the grocery trade at Stratford, indigestion and nervous debility set in, compelling me to place myself under medical treatment. The doctor



told me to get out of doors more and then I should not require his service, and from that time to this present day my health is gradually declining, and it is only by perseverance and endurance of a body racked with pain I continue my present duties. Both bodily and mentally my feeling at the close of Saturday duties are exhaustion, so much so that I am deprived of sleep more on that night than any other. A place of worship I always attend, but too often to sleep during the service. We have no time to attend to anything which would cultivate our mind. I live with my family. There are seven young men and youths employed—three under twenty and four over twenty. We have no relaxation from labour from Monday morning until Saturday midnight. We had for a few weeks, Thursday, 5 o'clock. Although we closed the shop with others in the neighbourhood, too often we had to labour the same as if the shop was opened. It lasted about six weeks. I have seen the ill effects on others, the same as on myself, from the long hours and close confinement: During my experience as foreman it is a common occurrence for our assistants to be taken with indigestion, liver complaints, and nervous debility, &c.; and if medical assistance is called in, nearly always we are told to give rest and change of air. The busiest part of the day with us is from half-past 7 until half-past 9 at night. I am certain the same amount of business could be done in less time. The cause of long hours is (1st) shopping and purchasing being left until home duties are done—being left to the last, when evening walks can be taken and purchases made; 2d, with the poorer classes, their indifference to their own welfare and that of others. It is immaterial to them, as long as a shop is opened they will get what they want. With twelve hours a day would follow the opportunity of taking healthy exercise and cultivation of the mind, and would be hailed as one of the greatest boons that could be given to counter labour. Proper time being given for meals must and would add to better health. In reference to the hours of labour given, 7 in the morning till 10 at night, I have not mentioned those seasons of the year which entail extra labour. Christmas time, December and January, we have to labour seventeen to eighteen hours a day, both before and after shop is closed. My assistants, also myself, get but little peace, being called up and away during our meal times. This refers to my experience in every situation I have held from a boy. In reference to Saturday's long hours, I doubt if our criminal class undergo the feelings of exhaustion as counter or shop labour. I cannot express myself in too strong a term when I say it is cruel and complete slavery. This may not be felt so keenly by youths and young men of twenty, but let them reach the age of thirty, when all the ill effects tell on them unmercifully.

James Albert M., Kentish Town, age 20, grocer's assist-



ant. I have been at Bow Road, E., Leyton Green, E., Kentish Town. At each place of business I began at 7.30 A.M. and finished work at 9.30 P.M. on every day of the week excepting Saturday, when the hours were from 7.30 A.M. to 12 P.M. I should average the time for meals at about fifteen minutes per meal. I was in perfect health when I first went to business, and, thanks to a very good constitution, I am fairly well now. At the end of business I usually feel fatigued, and quite disinclined for any exercise, physical or mental. On Sunday mornings I am so wearied that I am unable to rise earlier than 11, and then it is so late I hardly care to go to church, and if I do, I only hear the sermon. The morning is the busiest time, except on Saturdays, when the evening is a very busy time. I quite believe that the trade could be done equally well in much less time. Petty jealousy and avarice on the part of some employers cause the half-holidays to break down. Most certainly I should be delighted with twelve hours daily and a half-holiday, and should be able and willing to participate in those mental and physical advantages which are within my reach.

James G., Pentonville Road, N., age 20, draper's assistant. At Roman Road I used to begin at 7.30 and leave at 9.30; Saturdays from 7.30 till 12 midnight. Now I commence 7.30 and leave 8.30, in summer time 7 A.M. and leave 9.30; Saturday one hour later. From fifteen to twenty minutes, or the quicker the better, and then often called up in the meantime. Our lives are something cruel, next to hard labour.

J. A. H., Islington Green, N., age 24, clothes salesman. My hours have been: first place, 8 A.M. to 9 P.M.; Saturdays, 8 A.M. to 11 P.M. Now, 8.30 A.M. to 10 P.M.; Wednesday, 8.30 A.M. to about 6 P.M.; Saturday, 8.30 A.M. to midnight. I manage to stand the ten o'clock night very well, but on Saturday night I am tired out, and on Sundays I don't feel right till about tea-time. I live on the premises. There are three employed, one under twenty. I quite agree with having legislation for it, and it is my opinion that is the only remedy, as we have tried other means and failed.

John Jackson B., born in Kendal, Oct. 1820. Draper's assistant. Now residing at 27 Hotspur Street, Tynemouth. Jeffrey & Morrish, Liverpool, five years; Hardwick & Ford, Holborn, London, about nine years; Messrs Bainbridge & Co., Newcastle-on-Tyne, about thirty-six years. In the two first situations I commenced work at 6.30 in summer and seven in winter, and finished work in winter from eight to nine at night, and from ten to eleven in summer; Saturday nights an hour earlier. From twenty minutes to half an hour, with the probability of being called from meals once, twice, or thrice. In the busy seasons I have frequently gone from breakfast-time to tea-time fasting on an



exhausted system. I was exceptionally strong when I entered business. In the two first situations I was laid up every busy season for a month or six weeks. My health is now completely broken, only being able to attend business a few hours a day. I suffer severely from the ill effects, judging from what I have gone through, from long hours in a foul atmosphere, and irregularity in getting meals. I can blame nothing else, having lived a temperate life. As soon as I get into the air I feel completely stupified; and when I have attempted to attend a meeting after business, I have been so overcome with sleep as to prevent my going to any more. Under these circumstances, it is impossible to enjoy the confinement of services on the Sabbath day. In the first two situations I never had time to attend evening lectures, and too exhausted to read or cultivate my mind, although I should have valued it very much. In the two first situations I lived on the premises. There were from thirty to fifty male and female assistants; half the number under twenty, with about four to eight young ladies. Never was in a shop that had a weekly half-holiday. The first situation I had for five years the young men got out of the shop in summer at eleven o'clock, and were allowed twenty minutes. I may safely say that I have known, during my experience, hundreds of young men and women shunted from the trade before arriving at thirty years of age from sickness and disease, but no record having been taken of such cases, I have no addresses. The busy times are, in winter, from eleven to one, and three to five; summer, the same hours. The business could easily be done in three-fourths the time. One cause of long hours is laziness and indifference on the part of the public, and new concerns continually starting and breaking up the closing movements. Want of unanimity and competition breaks through the half-holiday movements. I had rather be a bond slave than again go through my past experience as a draper's assistant. It is impossible to live a healthy life as a draper's assistant if engaged in the exhaustive work in the foul air of a draper's shop for more than nine hours a day. A draper's assistant's work is most exhaustive; the brain work is immense; the irregularity in getting meals is most destructive. I believe that the majority of young ladies in drapers' shops are unfitted for business in from five to nine years.

Albert R., Mile End Road, E., age 26; draper's buyer. Southwark Park Road, Bermondsey, four years apprenticeship; Oxford Street, W., four years assistant; Mile End Road, E., four years buyer. The hours were respectively: (1) 8 until 9.30; Mondays, 8 until 10.30; Saturdays, 8 until 12; no half-holiday. (2) 9 until 6.30, winter months; 9 until 7.30, summer months; Saturdays, 2. (3) 8.30 until 8.30; Mondays, 8.30 until 9.30; Saturdays, 8.30 until 10.30; Thursdays, 8.30 until 5 o'clock. Meals, fifteen to twenty minutes each. I have several varicose veins in my legs, caused



through constantly standing. I feel fatigued every evening for want of fresh air, also dull and heavy. It is a usual thing for me to be called upstairs whilst having my meals. The long hours and so much confinement makes my feelings dead, and no energy to take any interest in anything. I lived on the premises for three years, and twelve months out. The number employed about thirty—fourteen females, four apprentices, and twelve males. About ten under twenty, and twenty above that age. I am sorry to say I have seen and know plenty of cases where assistants have had to go home for three months to recover their health, and some we never hear of again. It seems to affect the veins principally, and most assistants have to wear elastic stockings. I don't think I am wrong in stating that no other assistants in any trade are worked up to such a degree as the drapers, as from the time you enter business in the morning until you leave at night, we have to humble ourselves in the extreme, even worse than children at school, and take all kinds of insulting remarks from different people, and dare not retaliate or show any unpleasantness, or if you do so, you are told to make out your account and leave at a minute's notice; and the same thing applies if any assistant complains of the long hours or over pressure of work. I might state during the previous week of any holiday we have no time for closing, it depends on business. In Christmas week last year I worked fourteen, fifteen, and sixteen hours every day, and it happens in most places during the season, especially small houses. I can never make an engagement to meet a friend or attend a midnight meeting at a fixed time, as we cannot rely on any time within an hour any day in the week. We profess to close, the same as a good many other houses, at a time, but that means to commence which takes half an hour to complete, and sometimes there are no porters back from their delivery rounds of goods, that also delays half an hour sometimes; and then we have to remain in and put everything in proper order and cover all the goods up, which delays us in the season sometimes another hour without any ventilation whatever.

E. A. T., Poplar, E., age 20, draper's assistant. I was apprenticed at Ashford in Kent for three years, and after leaving there I came here. At Ashford we opened the shop at 7.45 and closed at 8 o'clock every night except Friday and Saturday. On Fridays we closed at 9.30, and Saturdays 10.30. At my present situation the hours of business are from 8.30 A.M. till 9.30 P.M., with the exception of Saturdays, when we close at 11.30 P.M. At Ashford no specified time for meals was allowed; on the average about fifteen minutes to each meal. At my present situation the time for breakfast is thirty minutes, and dinner forty-five minutes, tea thirty minutes. I was in good health when I first entered the drapery trade. Since I have been here I have twice fainted, and I must admit that I do



not feel so well and strong as I did when I was at Ashford. I often feel at the end of the day thoroughly tired and worn out from long standing and want of fresh air. Saturday being a long day (fifteen hours), when business is over we are only too glad to get into bed. Feeling very tired we often prefer lying in bed on Sunday mornings, feeling too tired to get up to breakfast or to attend a place of worship. Our only time for reading is between meal times and after business. We have no time to attend lectures or evening entertainments of any kind. I live on the premises, and there are thirty hands employed, thirteen males and seventeen females, of which six males and seven females are under twenty. I have observed the effects of long hours produced upon assistants generally, more especially in one case where a young lady entered the drapery trade, not far from here, and after being in it for a few years was obliged to leave in a state of consumption which in a few months brought her to premature grave.

J. E. W., draper's assistant, Stoke Newington, N. I was at Mile End Road twelve years. Commence at 8.30, leave at 8.30 in winter, 9.30 to 10 in summer, 10 on Saturdays. Towards the end of day I feel very exhausted from want of fresh air and the quantity of gas we burn, making the temperature equal to that of a Turkish bath, the glass frequently standing at 80 to 90 and even 100 in summer. Our closing time is called 8 o'clock winter, 8.45 to 9 in summer, 9.30 on Saturdays—that is, we commence at those times, but as it takes nearly thirty minutes to close, and the doors are kept open till the last, I need not say that the so-called hours of closing are a farce. We are behind the counter long after the shutters go up.

Henry Thomas D., Hackney, age 23, grocer's manager. I have been four years in the country, and four years and three months in town. The four years in the country was all in one establishment, and the time in London has all been with my present employer, but have been to three different branches. My hours now are from 7.30 A.M. to 9 P.M. on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, and 7.30 A.M. to 5 P.M. on Thursdays, and 7.30 A.M. to 10 P.M. Friday, and 7.30 A.M. to 12 midnight Saturday. In the country our time was from 7.30 to 7.30 Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday, 7.30 to 5 on Tuesday, 7.30 to 8 Friday; 7.30 to 10 Saturday. I have fairly good health; with outdoor exercise I am positive I should feel much better. The ill effects show themselves every day, when I get up in the morning I do not feel at all refreshed. On Sunday mornings I feel most decidedly too tired to get up before about 12 o'clock, and then feel drowsy all day. I live on the premises. There are four persons engaged here, one under twenty. We close at five o'clock on Thursday, and have done so for fifteen months, and the rest of the time I



have been in London, I have always had an evening off once a fortnight. I have observed the effects of the long hours on a great many young men and women, who suffer more or less as they get older in shop labour. The evening is the busiest part of the day with us, and I have no doubt but that the business could be done in less time if everybody closed their shops. I should be very pleased to have the hours shortened, but think it must be the work of time. I think more fault lies with the assistants than with the employers, when they had the evening they did not make use of it sufficiently to strengthen the cause. The present style of one district closing and the next not I do not like at all, though we close. I do it because if we were not to, none of the others would. I mean grocers, as all the cheesemongers open and a great many others as well.

Arthur H. C., Islington Green, age 15. Salesman (clothes). I have been here about eighteen months. I begin business at half-past eight and close at ten, excepting Saturday, when I close at twelve o'clock at night. I was in pretty good health when I began business, and I have had good health and now feel well and strong. I feel all right up till about nine o'clock, and after that I feel beddish. I don't feel up to much on Sunday morning, but it wears off later on. I should like to attend classes or lectures but I have no time. I live on the premises. There are three males employed, including myself.

Herbert D., age 23, grocer. Whitechapel Road, E. I begin at 7.30 A.M. to 9 P.M., and 12 P.M. and after on Saturdays. Average time for each meal, twenty minutes. I came up from the country, and I was in perfect health then, but since my health has failed me very much, and at times I feel fit to die. I feel the great effects of standing and from the want of fresh air and exercise. I live on the premises. There are six males and one female, four above, three under twenty years of age.

John W. B., age 29, draper's assistant. Burdett Road, E. I have been in three establishments. The hours were: No. 1, 8.30 A.M. to 8 P.M., and 6 P.M. on Saturdays; No. 2, 8.30 A.M. to 10 P.M., 11 P.M. on Saturdays; No. 3, 8.30 A.M. to 8.30 P.M., 9 P.M. on Saturdays, 5 P.M. on Thursdays. Have been ill, and had to ask out to get some air. I could not continue living in the business houses, and had to live out for my health's sake. I have felt and wished to be breaking stones in the streets, and have envied those whose employment was outdoors. I feel depressed in mind and body, especially Saturday nights. Have only sufficient spirit and ability to take a little midnight air and then go to bed, and am unable to get in time to a place of worship on Sunday mornings. Although having made several attempts to join classes,



&c., to improve my mind, could not get in time, and had to discontinue them. I do not live on the premises, and should not expect to live long if I did, having been accustomed to a different life before I came to London. At No. 1 place there were fifty assistants, at No. 2 twenty-five, No. 3 three. Several apprentices in Nos. 1 and 2, and one in No. 3, which is a mourning warehouse. We close on Thursday at five o'clock for the last eighteen months, which I do not consider a half-holiday, as if we got off at two o'clock. I have seen several reduced in health, and had to leave in consequence. As one instance of illness occurring through over exertion, from heat of gas and long hours my health was run down as to leave me susceptible to illness, and I took the small-pox, and was sent to Hamerton Fever Hospital, where I had it very bad, and was confined there six weeks. I have been a total abstainer and member of a place of worship, and hope to continue so while I live; but I feel deeply for those like myself debarred the privileges of living as human beings, and not as slavish machines to be knocked about as the employer sees fit, even for a small salary, which some who have spirit cannot endure, and emigrate to different parts of the world, where they live, and not simply exist as beasts of burden; while others, such as labourers, mechanics, &c., have some enjoyment in their lives. But I live in hope that such things cannot continue, while civilization and education make rapid strides of progress, and trust that the means being used to ameliorate the condition of shop assistants generally by true and noble men, will work a complete revolution for the benefit of those who eagerly look for it.

Samuel P. H., age 23, draper's assistant. Four years apprentice at Chard, one year at Sandown, I. W.; five years and a quarter at Pentonville Road. I have to be in business at 8.15 A.M. till 8.30 P.M., an hour later on Saturdays eight months in the year, the other four months 9.30 P.M. each evening, and 10 P.M. on Saturdays. Fifteen minutes for breakfast, thirty minutes for dinner, thirty minutes for tea; same in each establishment. I had excellent health at first, but feel anything but strong now. Never had a half-holiday. I have seen a young lady come into the drapery the embodiment of good health, and in less than two years look pale and worn and broken down. The public find out what time you close, and drive off shopping till the last moment.

Charles B., age 26, draper's assistant. I am now at Commercial Road. Have been at High Street, Aldgate; High Street, Nottinghillgate; High Street, New Brentford; High Street, St John's Wood. The average time is for "dusters" to begin business at 7.15 or 7.30 A.M., "non-dusters" at 8 or 8.20 A.M., closing the shop at 9 P.M., and getting out from twenty minutes to sixty minutes after the hour. Saturdays close at 11 or 11.30



P.M. I was in perfect health when I left home, since then I have had as good health as I could possibly expect. Altogether I am not nearly so strong as I used to be, and believe that the last five years has aged me ten. I have indigestion, and contract colds easily. Generally at the end of the day I am too tired to care much for bodily recreation, and quite incapable of making any mental exertion in the way of study; the only acceptable reading is a newspaper. Few lectures are as late as 9.30 P.M. before they commence; even if there were more they would not be attended largely. Have always lived on the premises in each situation I have held. There are from thirty-five to forty employed in the shop, about half of the number being under twenty-one, seven of the number being young ladies. We have had a weekly half-holiday (Thursday, five o'clock), since July 6th, 1882. Old drapers nearly always walk badly owing to the pains they have taken to cultivate corns and bunions, giving hours every day more than is necessary, and a plentiful crop is generally the result. I firmly believe (and my observation and experience confirm my belief) that in the majority of cases the health is undermined to such an extent as to be unable to resist contagion or even slightly defective drainage. The busiest times are the afternoon, and always an hour or half-an-hour previous to the known hour of closing. When it is known that we close at five, customers make a rush to get here at half-past four: and closing at ten, the bulk of purchasers arrive from 9 to 9.30 and later. Have never been in a house yet in which the business proper could not be done in eight hours, and about four hours or less for stock-keeping. Twelve hours a day! a consummation most devoutly to be wished. Mind and body would profit, and there would be some hope of being able to raise one's self from the deep rut in life that a draper's assistant falls into. A young lady friend of mine, owing to a slight impediment in her speech, is debarred from taking a situation in a good house, and had to be content with a third rate one in the Caledonian Road, N., in which she was rarely out of the business before 10 P.M., generally after, and on Saturdays 12 P.M. She was naturally delicate, and the work was too much for her, for some of the responsibility was placed on her over several apprentices, and looked upon as first-hand. There were no holidays or early closing, or recreation. She gradually got weaker, and cold succeeded cold until she was too ill to stand, suffering with giddiness as well as weakness, and was sent home to Finsbury Park by her employer without any one to take care of her. However, she arrived safely, more by good luck, than good management, and was taken seriously ill. She had been delirious for two days before I heard of her illness. Doctors say it was typhoid fever. I say that had she had better treatment, and a more Christianlike share of labour, she would most likely have been able to resist the fever.



Frederick W. F., Stratford, Essex, age 40. Four constant situations, viz. :—four years Lambeth Walk, S. ; three years Cambridge Road, E. ; six years Hackney Road, E. ; six years present firm ; three situations a few months each. The hours are—we commence at 7.30 ; close at 10 o'clock ; 9.30, and for the past six years at 9 o'clock ; Fridays, 10 o'clock ; Saturdays, 11.30. Twenty minutes each meal. Was in good health, and am thankful to say I am still so, excepting injury to eyesight, caused by working so long by gaslight. I have not felt much ill effects yet, but cannot but expect to do so in time. At the end of the day I feel unfit for work after 8, and on Saturday night when once I sit down don't feel inclined to get up again, even to go to bed. Can't expect to get in time for church in the morning. I live on premises. There are four males, one female, three under twenty. Never had half-holiday. I have an evening off once in three weeks after six. During my term of management here, four out of seven have left on account of bad health, and two out of four are now often complaining of general debility. We are busiest afternoon and evening. Business could be finished by 8 o'clock easily. The cause of weekly holiday breaking down is, that provision men refusing to unite with the grocers and cheesemongers, consequently grocers and cheesemongers refusing to join the grocers. Twelve hours a day and a half-holiday would decidedly tend to improve health, give reasonable time to eat food instead of bolting it in haste. Would improve the mind and morals of assistants, as they would then attend places for that purpose. I am glad to say the drapers have set a good example in Stratford. I think the grocers would follow, but after earnest efforts a few finally objected to join in the movement. I think that if employers will study the interests of their men a little, the men will assuredly study the interests of their employers.

C. W. N., Kentish Town, age 41, grocer and oilman. I have been at Buckingham Palace Road, Harrow Road, Wandsworth Road, High Street, Notting Hill. First place mentioned above, eight years ; second, two years ; four years, and one year ; in my present situation thirteen years. The average hours have been 7.30 A.M. to 9.30 P.M., Saturdays, 12 o'clock. Meal times, twenty minutes each meal. I am suffering from varicose veins in my leg, obliged to wear elastic stocking from ankle to thigh for the last seven or eight years. Am always thankful when the day is over, and I find it a hard struggle to be up in time on Sunday for morning service. I live on the premises ; there are six of us, four under twenty. Never had half-holiday. Have known several suffering the same as myself from varicose veins, also at Christmas time have known several obliged to give up on account of the severe strain before and at that season ; it is cruel work. I believe nothing less than legislation can give us what we want. I have seen early closing tried in every place I have filled, and it always failed through the want



of unity ; one has broken the rule and all the rest followed. I have spoken to many in other trades on the subject, and they have told me it is the same with them.

G. J. P., Kentish Town, N.W., grocer and oilman. My hours are 7.30 till 9.30, Saturdays till 12 midnight. We have twenty minutes each meal. I was compelled on one occasion (twelve months ago) to resign my situation in consequence of my health breaking down through the excessive hours I have to work, and on another occasion I was disabled for two months. At the end of the day, and especially on Saturday, I feel unfit for anything. I seldom go to a place of worship till Sunday evening. I live on the premises. There are six of us, four under twenty. Never had a half-holiday. The manager of this establishment is now suffering from varicose veins, the result of long standing.

Andrew S., age 25, draper. Went to business at fourteen years of age. I have worked at Aberdeen, Kingsland Road, Westminster Bridge Road, Walworth Road, and Commercial Road. First place, we commenced business at 9 A.M., and left off at 7 P.M. ; Saturdays at 2 P.M. At Kingsland Road the hours were 8 A.M. to 10 P.M. ; and Saturdays nearly 12 P.M. At Walworth 8.30 to 9.30, and 10.30 P.M. on Saturdays. At present, 8.30 to 9.30, and 10.30 Saturdays, and 5 o'clock Thursdays. Meal times are from twenty to twenty-five minutes for dinner, and twenty minutes for tea. I was in perfect health when I first went to business, and for two years after I came to London, but after that my health began to leave me, and for the last six years I haven't felt well, and I can give no other reason for it but the long hours and being continually on foot, either walking or standing, and the want of fresh air and exercise. Sometimes the muscles of my legs feel as if I had been beaten hard with a stick, in fact some nights I feel altogether fit to drop ; as for my mental feelings, I generally used to drown them with a glass or two of beer. On Sunday mornings it is very rare if I can make a stir till the church bells have left off ringing. I do not live on the premises. There are twenty-three males, and about twelve females ; about eighteen over twenty, and the remainder under twenty. I know now of two cases of illness through the long standing, one of diseased legs, the other bad legs and back. I may add that when in Aberdeen I felt quite a pleasure in life. I could attend the Y.M.D. Society there, I attended a singing class, I attended a weekly service in connection with the church I belonged to, and I attended and was a member of the Y.M.C. Association. I also attended a weekly prayer-meeting, and on Saturday afternoons I used to take my long walk out through the country, and feel fifty per cent. better when I came back again. I must say I was never so happy in all my life as I was then. I ought to feel happy and comfortable now, with a nice home, a good wife,



and two dear children, but alas I don't, for Thursday afternoon and Sunday, with very few exceptions, are the only times I can speak with my children. I am gone before they get up, and before I get home they are asleep. So as far as I can see, these long hours are the ruin of both soul and body of thousands of men and women.

Alfred B., age 29, manager of oil shop, Hackney, E. Been with two firms in Brompton Road, S.W., at Marylebone, and at Islington, N. The hours are: I commence at a quarter past 7 A.M., and do not leave the shop until 10 o'clock at night, often later; Friday nights, half-past ten; Saturdays, begin same time, and leave the shop at half-past twelve at night. At the places where I have been meal times are ten minutes for breakfast and tea, twenty minutes for dinner, and always being called out to serve customers, and having a hot dinner cold. I am sometimes ready to drop. On Saturday nights, scarcely know how to crawl up to bed, and do not feel fit to get up and attend any place of worship. Have closed at five on Thursdays about fourteen months. Was three years and three months without having an hour from the shop until we closed on Thursdays, with the exception of Bank holidays and Sundays. The cause of long hours is studying the public too much, for as long as the shop is open they will come; if the shops are closed at eight they will come before eight. My experience of the half-holiday is this, when one district closes at five perhaps (we will say a cheese-monger's for instance), a new shop will open. Well, he will say that he cannot close—just opening new shop. And that, I find, causes a general break-down, especially where there are pigs, not human beings. I should be another man with only twelve hours a day and a weekly half-holiday.

William W., age 36, Newcastle-on-Tyne, boot salesman. I have been in this town ten years. The hours are: we open at 9 A.M. and close at 8 P.M. the first four days, Friday nights 9 P.M., and Saturday nights 11 P.M. One hour has been allowed for dinner in each place, and twenty minutes for tea, except on Saturdays, when we have to eat it as quickly as possible. I had comparatively good health when I first went into a shop, and I have the same now, but being manager I am exceptionally placed. I frequently feel very languid, and suffer a good deal from pains and weakness in the back, which I think is mainly attributable to so much standing. "Oh dear, how tired I am," is an expression which falls from my lips almost as regular as the days go round, and although I love to read and to study, I find it very difficult to do either after my day's work is over. On Saturday nights I am (in the summer time especially) thoroughly exhausted, and on Sunday mornings feel fit for nothing but to loll about. If I go to church, I am sure



to feel sleepy in spite of myself. Seeing that it is always nine o'clock by the time I get home and have my supper, the time left for cultivating my mind is small indeed. Lectures are out of the question. I do not live on the premises. We have two females and four males, four are under twenty and two above. Never had a weekly holiday. I have seen young rosy-faced girls enter the shop pictures of health, and I have seen the bloom gradually fade from their cheeks, and they have in a very short time changed into sickly creatures, always ailing something. The afternoon and evening is the busiest with us, but the same business could be done in much less time if required. The cause of these long hours is keen competition among shopkeepers. The one is frightened that the other would get the custom that might come to him if he kept open later. In places where the half-holiday has broken down, it has been through some selfish, unprincipled people persisting in keeping their shops open. I think the half-holiday should commence at two o'clock at the latest.

William E., 137 Regent Street, Leamington, age 23. I have worked at Thorne two years, and at Leamington two years. The hours at Thorne, 8 A.M. to 7.30 P.M., Saturdays 10 P.M.; at Leamington, 8 A.M. to 8 P.M., Saturday 10 P.M. Meal times, breakfast fifteen minutes, dinner twenty minutes, tea fifteen minutes. I never have been very strong, but always healthy; now I am scarcely ever free from headache and a worn-out, languid feeling. I attribute the above to want of fresh air and proper exercise. Every night I am worn-out, body and mind. Always attend chapel on Sunday mornings, but often feel very tired. Lectures, &c., are half over before I can get in. I live on the premises. We have four males, two under twenty and two over twenty. I have no holidays. The cause of long hours is thoughtlessness on the part of customers. If we kept open all night there is a certain class who would come at midnight. I should be quite satisfied with twelve hours, but at the same time that is even too long to keep open. Should be delighted with half-an-hour for each meal; I am never more than a quarter at any meal. Last summer we began the Thursday five o'clock closing, but it soon broke up, and now we have no cessation between Monday morning and Saturday night. Parliament ought to interfere; the customers will not help us apparently, and the masters are too grasping in most cases to sacrifice anything in the way of lessening the hours of labours.

Thomas C., Camberwell, age 38, cheesemonger's windowman. I came from the country to this place. I have been here three and a half years. In the summer my hours are from 7.30 A.M. till 10 P.M.; Saturdays, 12 P.M. Winter, Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, 7.30 A.M. till 9.30 P.M.; Fridays, 10 P.M.;



and Saturdays, 12 P.M. Twenty minutes breakfast, sometimes ten minutes; dinner, half-an-hour, sometimes ten minutes; tea, twenty minutes, sometimes ten minutes. Often called away in the middle of your meal, but still have to be at your post at the appointed time. I was in the best of health when I came, but I have been far from it for some time past. My poor feet and legs always ache when I get up in the morning; my feet are so swollen that I can scarce get my boots on. And as to our food, we do not get time to masticate it, but we have to bolt it. I feel entirely worn out at night when I get home, and I am no sooner in my chair than I am fast asleep. On Saturday night, or rather Sunday morning, as I do not get home until one o'clock, I am then dead beat; and on Sunday I do not feel fit for anything or to go anywhere. I have no time for anything whatever. I do not live on the premises. We have five males and one female; three above twenty, and three under. We have no holiday; we used to close at five o'clock on Thursdays for a little while, about four months I should think. One of our young men from the other shop was obliged to give up his situation on account of the long hours, as he had such bad legs, and he has now gone abroad; and the young man that took his place is now attending a doctor for the same complaint. The busiest part of the day is from breakfast until dinner time, or from ten till one; and I think that the same business could be got through in eight or ten hours, as well as it is now done in fourteen hours. The cause of these long hours is, because the masters are so much afraid that one will take a trifle more than the other, and they keep open one against the other. I should be perfectly satisfied and thankful to the Almighty, to think that I could have proper rest; and I do not think any one ought to be dissatisfied with twelve hours per day, and a half-holiday. I have four little children at home and one at work, and I very seldom see the dear little things from Sunday night until the next Sunday morning, unless I go and look at the poor little things lying in bed asleep, which I think a very hard case.

John Benjamin T., age 26, draper's assistant. At present at Mile End Road, have been there six months; before at Westminster Bridge Road, six months; before in Holborn Bar, nine months; before at New Oxford Street, Commercial Road. As a rule the hours are from 7.30 A.M. to 9.30 P.M.; Saturdays, 11 to 12 P.M. For breakfast, fifteen minutes; dinner, half-an-hour; tea, twenty minutes. I was in good robust health when I first came to the drapery trade. I do not feel so well and strong. I feel the ill effects every day, for the want of fresh air and exercise, which shows itself very plainly in indigestion and torpidity of the liver, and am quite unfit for mental or bodily exertion. Saturday night thoroughly used up. Sunday morning more inclined, if allowed,



to lie in bed than get up and attend public worship. No time for lectures, mutual improvement societies, as they always commence before closing time. I live on the premises. Thirty employes; about twelve under eighteen. We close on Thursdays at five. I cannot trace any death through these long hours, but know that it has had the effect of causing many to be so ill, that they have had to leave and take rest (which no doubt has often saved them from death). Particularly is this the case with boy apprentices and young ladies. The afternoon and evening are the busiest. I am positive the same amount of business could be well and thoroughly done in half the time. The cause of long hours is, that the employers and their managers or shopwalkers in encouraging the public to shop late, and when they do come late to persuade them that they are in good time, so that they get quite comfortable and make their purchases long after the shutters are down. Want of unity amongst the assistants causes the half-holiday to fail. This would be a boon indeed, to work only twelve hours. But I do not see the necessity for twelve hours per day, when all could be well done in ten hours. I think ten hours long enough. In the drapery trade an employer keeps his assistants on an occasion without asking them to oblige him, or without remuneration of any kind, money or otherwise, for overtime. Take Christmas week, which is always considered a holiday by right—I mean Christmas day and Boxing day. Before we were entitled to that holiday, we were in for about a fortnight before from 10 to 10.30 P.M., and the Saturday and Monday 12 P.M., and no 5 o'clock Thursday. And with these long hours there is so much discipline and restraint, which in a great measure rests with the shopwalker or manager, that I am certain that a large proportion of young men, after a long day's work, and smarting under some injustice of this kind, rush off to the nearest public-house, to seek that change and rest that they cannot find in the house of the master they endeavour to serve faithfully and well.

William W., Stratford, grocer's assistant. I have been at Norbitton, Rotherhithe Wall, Deptford, St Bethnal Green, Bromley by Bow, Nunhead Green, High Street, Stratford. I have been about six and a half years in the trade. At three of my situations I went as Christmas hand. The hours were as follows:—At Norbitton, 8 A.M. till 8 P.M. the first five days; Saturdays, 10 P.M. At Rotherhithe, 7.30 A.M. till 9.10 P.M.; Fridays and Saturdays, 12 P.M. At Deptford, 7.30 A.M. till 9.30 P.M.; Friday, 10.30 P.M.; Saturday, 12.30 P.M. At Bethnal Green, 7.30 A.M. till 10 P.M.; Friday, 10.30 P.M.; Saturday, 12.15 P.M. At Bromley by Bow, 7.30 A.M. till 9.30 P.M.; Friday, 10.30 P.M.; Saturday, 12 P.M. At Nunhead Green, 7.30 A.M. till 9 P.M.; Friday, 10.15 P.M.; Saturday, 12 P.M. At Stratford, 8 A.M. till 9 P.M.; Friday, 10 P.M.; Saturday, 11 P.M. I find the average



time allowed for meals is twenty minutes. I was in perfect health when I came to this trade, but the long hours and no exercise has completely undermined my constitution, and I am now going into a decline. The doctors have ordered me a sea voyage or to go to another climate, but I cannot do either, as they will not have any one who has not been to sea before only before the mast, and I have no money to pay my passage to another climate. After being in the shop and standing so long,—from 5.30 till 11 o'clock, without anything to eat or drink; and what we do have is very plain, never get a relish to help down our coffee and bread and butter, or our tea and bread and butter,—I feel fit for nothing, not the strength to clean my boots; and Sunday mornings I cannot put my boots on, for my feet are so swollen by standing so long. I would many times lie till dinner time to rest a little, but they come and rout us out. I live on the premises. There are four of us over twenty, one under. We have no half-holiday, but are trying hard for it now. There is one man refuses to close on any conditions, but we are trying to leave him out. My fellow-assistants are like myself, always complaining of the long hours, feel tired in the morning to start with. The busiest parts of the day are—Morning, from eleven till twelve; evening, from half-past six till eight. I am sure we could do the same business in much less time; and we are all quite willing to work harder to get the work done sooner, to have more time to ourselves. The cause of the half-holiday not succeeding is because there are such a lot of men who are not satisfied with the trade they are doing; that they think, by keeping open, they get a few stray customers. The trade we do on Thursdays does not pay for gas. I should be quite satisfied, and be quite able to take healthy exercise, if the hours were reduced to twelve, and we had a half-holiday. I think that if we started business at seven, and closed at half-past six or seven, we could get on much better in shop labour; as we could get out to lectures, and go to evening classes to improve our education, and have proper rest at night.

Walter B., 26 Circus Road, London, N.W., age 25, hosier's assistant. I have been at High Street, Shoreditch, E.; Chalk Farm Road, N.W.; Circus Road, N.W. I used to begin at the first three places mentioned at 8 A.M. and leave at 10 P.M. every day except Saturday, and then at 12 P.M. I now begin at 7.45 A.M. and leave at 8.30 P.M.; Saturday, 10 P.M. Meals, twenty minutes. Fortunately, I am well, but have had one severe illness through close confinement. I feel tired as the day closes, and not up to anything whereby I might improve my mind or body. On Sunday I feel more inclined for a stroll in the fresh air than going to church. I live on the premises. There are two males under twenty. Over competition is the cause of much we suffer, but the assistants hold the remedy in their own hands; unity and deter-



mination would prove victorious. The market may be overdone, so was the market for mechanical labour, but the working-man won his day, and so can we, and I mean to fight till we win.

W. F. C., Bexley Heath, draper's assistant, age 21. I was apprenticed at High Street, Kensington, where I stayed but eleven months. At Finchley, eighteen months. At Walworth Road, twenty months. I have been in one or two other houses, where I stayed but a short time, although quite long enough. When at Kensington we began business at 7 A.M. and closed at 9 P.M., 10 P.M. on Saturday; but being apprentice, and having to balance books, etc., after business, I was frequently in the shop until 12 P.M., and sometimes on Sunday mornings till 3 or even 4 A.M. At Walworth Road the hours of business were 9 A.M. to 10 P.M. 9 A.M. to 12 P.M. on Saturdays. We were always out sharp to time. I now get much shorter hours, 8.30 A.M. to 7.15 P.M., 5 on Wednesday. Dinner, thirty minutes; tea, twenty minutes; supper, fifteen minutes on Saturday night. In most of the houses in which I have been engaged assistants have frequently been called forward to the counter in less than half that time. When I went to Kensington I was in good health, but having been accustomed to farm life, the long hours of confinement and work soon told upon me. I left Walworth last August, the continual strain and close confinement being too much for me, as frequently I never got out of doors from one Sunday to the next. I am now in good health. When at Walworth and Kensington I was on Sunday fit for little except to rest for another week's work. At the end of the day, when the day comprises thirteen or fourteen hours, no man, and much less a lad or a woman, can feel otherwise than tired, and after six such days, with an additional two or three hours on the sixth, the majority of the assistants are quite exhausted. I have now time; but when at Walworth and at Kensington I, of course, had no time to go to any lectures. I have lived upon the premises in all the houses of business where I have been. At Kensington there were about fifteen, half under and half over twenty years of age. At Walworth Road there are about forty, at least thirty of them being under twenty. About a dozen of them are about from thirteen to sixteen years of age. There are about six girls there between the ages of fourteen and eighteen. I have a half-holiday now. At Kensington I had not. In Walworth we had one last year, *i.e.* from September 1882 to March 1883. In all the houses where there are long hours I have noticed that the female assistants are, so to speak, in a chronic state of fatigue, complaining how tired they are from the first thing on Monday morning to the last thing on Saturday night. A young man at Walworth had to attend St Thomas's Hospital on account of injury to the feet, which the surgeon told him was the result of long standing, adding that he frequently had cases of the kind, chiefly from



grocers' and drapers' assistants. The only remedy for the long hours of labour in shops and warehouses is an Act of Parliament making early closing compulsory. Because (1st) where the voluntary system prevails, and in the houses to which some persons point to show what can be done by it, although the shutters are up at a certain time, the assistants are at work quite as long, only the heads of departments getting away at a reasonable hour. (2d) The excess of labour in the market places the young and inexperienced entirely at the mercy of the employer, so that it is impossible to form any union among them to enable them to obtain early hours themselves. This is especially the case with regard to the metropolis, thousands of assistants pouring in every year from the country, willing to come in for a mere nothing to get experience of the London trade. (3d) In the poorer neighbourhoods nothing short of an Act of Parliament can compel the minority to close. The assistants themselves have no time whatever to form or to work a union association, even if the voluntary movement were practicable. Compulsory closing could not lessen the amount of goods distributed, because every one will procure whatever is wanted, but it would necessitate the employment of more assistants, and would probably diminish the trade done in other than the main thoroughfares, since many customers being compelled to shop before a certain time, would not be obliged to run down a back street to find a shop open.

W. A. P., oilman manager, age 29, 8 Aylesbury Street, Clerkenwell. My hours have been for four years, 8 A.M. till 10.30 P.M. every day; Saturday, 8 A.M. till 12.30 P.M., and walk to Bow from Hoxton nearly every Saturday. Since then, 8 till 9.30, 12 on Saturday. No time at all for meals, get them how you can in the shop for years. I have never had a meal out of the shop excepting Sunday and holidays. Had never had a day's illness until four years ago, when I was laid up for nine weeks, and have never been well in the winter since. Spit up blood, and cough. Nearly every winter the doctors recommend fresh air, but I must work or starve. At the close of Saturdays I feel as if I should like to lie in bed for a week, and I never think of getting up until about 12 o'clock on Sunday; in fact, if it was not for Sunday's rest, I never should be able to do the week's work. I never attend a place of worship, I am never up early enough. I have hardly any time for meals, let alone time to attend lectures. Have not been to one for ten years. I live on the premises. I have not a weekly holiday. Never had one; don't know how I should feel if I had one. I have observed the effects of long hours; know of plenty young men who have had to go home ill, and been at home for weeks.

Charles Edward T., King's Cross Road, age 30, grocer. I have



been at 89 High Street, Kingsland, and present address. I was three years at the head shop, and have been assistant, then manager at this branch shop ever since, nearly eleven years. The hours are open 7 A.M. for first nine years, but it was pronounced 7.30 A.M. about four years ago. Have always closed at each place at 9.30; Friday, 10; Saturdays, midnight; and by the time I have done my booking and cashing up, it is most times turned 1 o'clock Sunday morning. We have no allotted time for meals, but get your meals as quick as you can, for you are wanted at the counter again. If we drink our tea in ten minutes, we are expected to leave the table and be off at once. Sometimes we are called from meals, especially dinners, sometimes as many as three, four, or five times, and it gets cold, and the appetite has left one, then I leave it on my plate and go hungry till next meal. I have certainly had moderate health, but it is gradually failing me. I suffer from swollen feet and legs, with tiresome pains at times. When I go out into the country I am sure to have a headache. I believe it is the continual confinement to business, and improper time to digest my meals. Being a manager I have to be very careful, and am anxious to see everything go on right, because it is the smallest things offend the employers at times, especially if trade is dull. My feelings at the end of the day, especially on Saturday nights, are I wish modern slavery would be done away with. My life is a burden to me, and sometimes feel as it would be a blessing if I were called away from my toil and trouble. As for Sunday mornings I can never get up in time, and if I did, I have no heart to go to a place of worship, because I know I cannot help falling into a sleep. I have tried and do know it. As for time to attend any lecture, reading, &c., I have no earthly time, it is bedtime before I am. We have no holiday whatever, except the Bank holidays, and if we have been in his employ over eighteen months, we are entitled to a few days' holidays sometime in the summer if we ask for some. I have had but three weeks in thirteen years and a half. Assistants say they cannot stand it any longer, so they leave, not from any ill-feeling with me, but they know as well as I the work must be done, and when Saturday night's work is done I find they are dead beat. The busiest times are from 11 A.M. till 1 o'clock, from 3 till 5, and from 7 to 8.30 even on a Saturday, from which time the trade diminishes gradually till the close. In fact, if I closed every night at 8 P.M. I should do just as much and take as much money, and effect a very great saving in gas, as well as dawdling about the place. My opinion is, firstly, it is the want of union amongst tradesmen; secondly, they think it very obliging on their part to keep open for those who cannot come earlier for their few things; but such is not the case. This class of customer never come till they find you are pulling down the shutters, then they can take in supper beer as well they think. I am not in favour of the weekly half-



holiday. I should appreciate a monthly or fortnightly half-holiday very much ; but to have it every week would only involve making up for it next morning. If our hours were limited to twelve hours a day, we could say with the Saviour, "Is there not twelve hours of the day, if any man walk in the light he will not stumble," &c. As from 7 to 7 or rather 8 to 8, then we should have ample time for exercise and the better cultivation of our minds.

Alfred Alexander C., Hackney Road, age 22, an assistant in the general drapery business. I have been at Deptford Lower Road, Seven Sisters Road, Kingsland Road, Brixton, and Commercial Road. In first situation began business 8 A.M., finished 10.20 P.M. ; Saturdays, 8 A.M. to 1 A.M. Sunday morning ; during stock-taking worked until the morning trains commenced to run. Second situation, 7.20 A.M. to 9.20 P.M. ; Saturdays, 7.20 A.M. to 11 P.M. ; same in third and fourth situations. In first situation, breakfast and tea fifteen minutes, including time for washing, &c. ; in my other situations, breakfast and tea twenty minutes, dinner half-an-hour ; this is about the average time allowed. I now always look ill and pallid, blood has become impure several times. I feel that the hours are telling on me, and that if the present condition continues I shall die a premature death. I am now under medical treatment ; my chest seems weak from the want of fresh air and outdoor exercise. At some situations I have had to leave the table to serve customers. Feel ravenously hungry (a temperance man), disinclined to do anything but mope about. Very few assistants attend any Sunday morning services. Many do not rise until 11 A.M. I have joined (subscribed to) various educational classes, but have always been unable to attend. At a shop-assistant's Bible class of which I am a member, some are unable to attend through late hours. I live on the premises. There are over fifty ; eleven under twenty years of age, the rest are older. We have only one assistant over fifty, and he is dying of consumption. An old assistant (in years) is a rarity. Nearly all have swollen legs. The young ladies become flat chested. In the establishment at which I am now engaged, two have died from consumption during the last fifteen months, several have gone home ill. The majority spit phlegm. A cousin, a female assistant, died from consumption, the doctor said, through long hours. Drunkenness is caused by these long hours. The only places usually open to an assistant are the Music Hall and public-house. Many think the evil is fully met by the present Y.M.C. Associations, but there are only forty-five in London, and there are at least 300,000 assistants. So there is only one institution to every 6000 assistants. Emigration is no remedy, shop-assistants are not wanted in the Colonies. The basis of all unionism is the wage-scale, but hardly two assistants are in the receipt of the same salary. After forty years of the voluntary system, shops in



Bermondsey, Wandsworth, Rotherhithe, Shoreditch, Lambeth, &c., still are open until 1 A.M. on Sunday morning, and 10 P.M. every other week night.

Alfred S., Whitworth Place, Plumstead, age 30, hatter's shopman. At Woolwich seven years, in Oxford Street, London, three years. I have usually begun business at 8 to 8.30 A.M. till 9 or 9.30 P.M., occasionally till 10 and 10.30 P.M., and on Saturdays till 11, 11.30, and 12 P.M. My health has been bad for a long time, which I believe to have been caused by long hours. I have been for the past six months, and still am, under medical treatment. The continual long standing has brought me to a state of great debility, greatly aggravated by the want of fresh air. At the end of the day I feel unfit for anything but rest, and on Saturday night I am thoroughly exhausted with aching limbs, which compels me to rest nearly the whole of Sunday. I have never enjoyed a weekly half-holiday until the one brought about by the S.H.H.L., which we have continued since November 1882. I have heard of several persons having to leave their employment in order to recruit their health.

George W. S., Tollington Road, Holloway, N., age 28, grocer. Six years at Birkenhead, seven years in Bishopsgate. At Birkenhead, 7.30 A.M. to 7.30 P.M.; Saturdays, 9.30 P.M. At Bishopsgate, 8 A.M. to 7.30 P.M.; Saturdays, 7 P.M. Breakfast before we come; dinner, one hour, except Fridays and Saturdays, three quarters of an hour; tea, half-an-hour. I do not live on the premises. There are thirty-nine males employed; twelve under twenty years, twenty-seven above. I have known several suffer principally from varicose veins.

Alfred C., Southwark Park Road, Bermondsey, age 20, cheese-monger's assistant. Been in two houses of business. I begin at 7.30 A.M. and leave business at 10 P.M.; Saturday night at 12.30. Half-an-hour to each meal. I was in perfect health when I first went to business, but I have not been so well since. I have been laid up two or three times. My feelings at the end of the day are: I feel regular worn out, same with Saturday night, and I never get up till 10 o'clock Sunday morning. I live on the premises; there are two of us. One of our managers is laid up now, and his brother died through the long hours and shop labour.

Frederic Soames S., Leopold Buildings, E., age 41, butterman. My hours are 7.30 A.M. till 10 P.M. on Monday till Friday; Saturday, 7.30 A.M. till 12.30 P.M. I know one man who has been laid up with bad legs for twelve months, and is not fit for work yet. Don't think shop-assistants' labour is so hard as it was a few years ago. Have known assistants to work eighteen hours both Fridays and Saturdays running.



Frank R., Tottenham Court Road, age 18, general draper. Begin at 7.30 A.M., and leave 9.30 P.M.. Do not leave on Saturdays till 10.30 P.M. Average for each meal, thirty minutes. The long hours do not agree with me. Do not feel fit for anything except to turn into bed after standing all day. I live on the premises. There are twenty hands employed—thirteen over, and seven under twenty years of age. No half holiday, nor a quarter either. Closed on Thursday at five o'clock for two or three months during winter of 1882, but that soon fell through. As an instance of the very grave manner in which the excessive hours prevent anything like mental cultivation or improvement, I may mention that although a member of the Polytechnic Institute, I am wholly unable to attend even one of the numerous classes held there, many of which would be most beneficial to me. It is most painful for me to see those of my own age, and who left school no better educated than myself, but whose present occupations allow them to attend the classes from which I am debarred, becoming daily more qualified to fill positions for which I shall never have the opportunity of filling myself. Serious as this is, it is scarcely more so than the general effect on my health and physique, caused by the impossibility of joining in any of the athletic sports, or of availing myself of the Institute recreation grounds in the suburbs. Even the gymnasium is almost useless to me, as it closes at ten o'clock; and even were it otherwise, I am too "dead beat" at night to feel much inclination for it.

Charles P., Peckham, S.E., age 29, grocer. In five places. My hours have been, as a rule, from 7 A.M. until 9 P.M., excepting Friday, which is 9.30 P.M.; Saturday, 11.45 P.M. Average meal times, half-an-hour to each meal. I have had but indifferent health for some time past, owing entirely to the long hours of confinement. I oftentimes feel the want of more outdoor exercise, but that we cannot have. Never under any circumstance has it been my privilege to attend any lecture or meetings. I live on the business premises. There are three male assistants, one under twenty years, and a servant girl, but that does not come under the heading; three above twenty years. No holidays. One evening a month has been the most that I have had the privilege to enjoy. I know it makes old men of the most of us before we are young ones. It is my firm opinion that it is only a matter of getting the public into earlier habits of shopping, and only can be done by compulsory closing of shops at eight o'clock all round. The stores can close at six, the large drapers at half-past seven, and surely the grocers, butchers, and cheesemongers could do the same. I consider that shop assistants are worse off than any other class, excepting cabmen, 'bus drivers, and barmen or barmaids, &c.

Harry B., Queen's Terrace, St John's Wood, N.W., age 30,



grocer. I have been in the trade sixteen years, therefore have had several situations both in town and country. The hardest place in the country was at Bedford, where we opened at 7 A.M. and closed at 8.30 P.M., but never thought of getting out of the shop before 10 P.M. three nights in the week, and 11 P.M. the other three. My first situation in London was at Nottinghill. Our time was 7.30 A.M., closed at 9.30 P.M., got out of the shop at 10, Saturdays, 12.30 P.M. Taking five more situations in London, my hours were from 7.30 to 9.30 P.M.; Saturdays, 12 P.M. Time allowed for meals, fifteen minutes each meal on an average; Saturdays no meal after dinner, except a glass of beer and a biscuit. I was in perfect health when I left home at the age of sixteen, but I am now far from being in health; in fact, I left several situations on account of my health giving way under the tremendous strain of long hours. I feel very much the want of fresh air and outdoor exercise. I feel on leaving business (Saturdays) so fatigued and worn-out, that I am often unable to get the much needed sleep, and I am, much to my regret, unfit to attend a place of worship before the evening. I board, but do not sleep on the premises. There are eleven assistants and porters, three under twenty. We close at five on Thursdays, but we are afraid it won't continue. I have known several young men coming from the country, to return home in six months utterly knocked-up through the long hours and excessive strain only. I must state my present situation is the most reasonable I have had. Were it not so, I should not be behind the counter now, as my previous situations have caused me varicose veins through long standing.

Edmund Hamilton D., High Street, Clapham, age 20, draper's assistant. Been at New North Road and here. New North Road, began 7.30 A.M., left off 9.30 P.M.; on Saturday, from 7.30 A.M. till 11.30 or 11.45 P.M. Hours in present situation, from 8 A.M. till 8.30 P.M., and till 10 P.M. on Saturdays. Average time taken, quarter-an-hour for meals. Have had an abscess in my back, which the medical man at the hospital stated was from over-work and long hours. I am subject to bilious attacks and headaches. Bodily feelings, somewhat worn-out; mental feelings, thankful that the day's work is done. Live on the premises. There are seven males, one female, four under twenty. Have had a half-holiday for six months in last situation, not one here. I know one case of a female assistant who had to leave business on account of her health failing through long hours.

G. B., Lambeth, age 24, draper's assistant. Been at Buckingham Palace Road, and Lower Marsh, Lambeth. Hours at Buckingham Palace Road were from 8.15 to 7.30; Saturday, 8.15 to 4.30. Here, 8.30, leave at 9.45, sometimes at 10 o'clock; Saturdays from 8.30 to 11.30. For breakfast, fifteen minutes; dinner, twenty



minutes ; tea, fifteen minutes. I always had good health until the last two years, when I first began to feel the effect of the long hours. I am now under medical treatment for extreme weakness. I feel the standing so long has had such a terrible effect on my legs. The want of air and more exercise I feel very keenly. I should enjoy my meals better with more time. I feel at the end of the day very tired, and instead of going for a walk, only feel fit for bed ; Saturday night I feel awfully tired, and on Sunday morning don't feel able to get up in time to go to church. I should only be glad to go if I left business earlier on Saturdays. I have no time to attend lectures or cultivate my mind as I should like to, if my hours were only shorter. I live off the premises (I should say business premises.) There are seven males and two females, three above twenty years and the rest under that age. We closed on Thursdays at 5 o'clock for nine months, ending at July last. I have often noticed how tired and worn some of my fellow assistants look after business, especially the females, who complain of the long standing. We have a country lad who feels the change from the country to the long hours very much.

Alfred W., Carfax Square, Clapham, S.W., age 35, grocery and wine trade. Been in five different shops. General business hours, 7 A.M. till 9 P.M. ; Saturdays, till 11 and 12 o'clock. Hour and a half in the day, sometimes get it if you can. Been compelled to leave several situations through getting weak, or, to use a vulgar phrase, pumped out. I had good health at first. My feelings were often very queer, dull, heavy, weary, giddy, tired out, especially on a Saturday night. Utterly unfit to attend a place of worship, as sure to go off to sleep. Never had such good luck at any shop as to have half-holiday. I have most decidedly seen the ill effects of the long hours on my fellow-workers ; have seen some of them faint, and others ready to drop from exhaustion and fatigue. If any assistant, no matter what position they may hold, dare to make any complaint, they are very coolly told that their services are not required any more.

Walter Dearsley C., Newington Butts, S.E., age 24, grocer's assistant. First situation in London, Balls Pond Road, in employ for three years ; then Marchmont Street, Russell Square, two and a half years ; then Shoreditch, E., nearly four years ; then Newington Butts, present situation. First, 8 o'clock till 9 o'clock ; Saturdays, 12 o'clock ; second, 8 o'clock till 9 o'clock ; Saturdays, 11.30 ; third, 8 o'clock till 9 o'clock ; Saturdays, 11.30. Breakfast, twenty minutes ; dinner, twenty minutes ; tea, twenty minutes ; not allowing more under any consideration. I came from the country fresh and strong, in perfect health, and enjoyed good health for the first five years, then I succumbed to the long hours and tedious work, and had to leave my situation on that



account. Everyday occurrence, worn out, not having any spirits or energy to do anything after business, and as to rise to attend a place of worship on Sundays, I feel too languid and tired, and should certainly go to sleep if I went. I live on the premises; there are eight employed, three under twenty, five above. I know one young fellow who had to return to the country on account of ill-health through its effects. Evening is the busiest, because the public have been accustomed to shop so late; there is not a doubt that the same amount of business can be done within less hours. The cause is because employers have indulged the public, and got them into that bad habit; and the cause of half-holiday breaking through is on account of discord amongst tradesmen in general. If we receive the privilege and blessings of shorter hours, how could any sensible young fellow be dissatisfied? It would be giving us a fair chance of improving our minds, and give us fresh energy for business every day, and would be beneficial to our employers in the end.

Charles William K., age 18, cheesemonger, Bride Street, Barnsbury. My hours have been from 8.30 till 10 o'clock at night till Thursday; 6 o'clock in the morning till 10 at night, Friday; 6 o'clock in the morning till 12 o'clock, Saturday. Half-an-hour to breakfast, one hour to dinner, half-an-hour to tea in every place. I don't feel very well at times. I feel very tired by the time I have done work. Rather short time for meals, having a good walk before I get home. I do not live on the premises. There are two males, one female, three over twenty.

James E., age 35, cheesemonger, Hoxton. Been in four places, five years in each. The hours have been 7.30 A.M. till 10 P.M., and on Saturday to 12.30. No particular time allowed; get your meals the best way you can, and keep on serving. I was in perfect health, but feet very bad through long standing. I feel fit to lie in bed all day on Sunday. I live on the premises.

George C., Caledonian Road, N., grocer's assistant, age 22, and W. H. H., grocer's assistant, age 20. Both generally began and left business, ordinary days 7.30 A.M. until 10 P.M.; Saturdays until 12 o'clock. As a rule about twenty minutes to half-an-hour. We both had excellent health when we first came into business, in fact, have enjoyed good health all our lives. But since coming into business, through the long hours, we find that it has considerably lowered our health both mentally and morally. In fact, the only fresh air we get is when closing and opening the shop. The usual feeling at the end of our day's toil is to sit down and go to sleep. On a Saturday night, as a matter of course, we are much worse, feeling altogether overdone. As to feeling fit to go to a place of worship, that is quite out of the question; the only thing we are fit for is to lie in bed, which of course we are not allowed to. No



time for lectures whatever, we are worse than heathens. Even what we learnt at school is forgotten, through not being able to read up ever. We live indoors. There are three of us employed. We have no weekly half-holiday. The busiest times are from two in the afternoon until about seven or eight in the evening. Yes, for it would give us more heart and put more energy into us to do it. The causes are a want of co-operation on the part of the masters, a feeling lest one should take a few pence more than the other, for what trade is done after 8 P.M. would really not pay for gas. We have not an opportunity as other workpeople have to join the volunteers, athletic or bicycle clubs; we are as bad or worse than prisoners, not being able to see our friends but once a week, and then only for an hour or two. I am sure if you obtain what you are now petitioning for, you will earn the eternal thanks of an army of young people, who are, as it were, ruining themselves through the slaving oppression of the long hours. We have nothing whatever to look forward to, except hard work (not so much hard work as the long hours) from day to day and week to week. Bank holidays are looked upon by us as a Godsend; even them we have to pay dearly for by having to work extra hard and later. We hope and trust with God's help you will be successful.

William S., Shepherd's Bush, age 21, draper. In the places I have been in, my hours have averaged fourteen a day, and sixteen on Saturdays. The time generally allowed for meals is about fifteen minutes, but in some cases thirty minutes is allowed. I know of many cases where assistants have been compelled to leave business through standing so many hours, some only for a few weeks, others not to return again. I know of several cases of young men suffering from irreparable injury through long standing, and also of young ladies fainting behind the counter from sheer exhaustion. I think that after reviewing the work of the Early Closing Association, which has worked indefatigably and unceasingly for more than forty years, it is quite clear that moral suasion will never get all tradesmen to close at a reasonable time. Since moral suasion fails to convince them that nothing will be lost by all closing at a recognised time, and the assistants, on account of the over stock of the market, being unable to combine and by this means compel employers to concede to their terms, I think that it is quite time the subject should be seriously taken in hand by the Legislation, and by so doing rescue a large proportion of the nation from early graves. The time stated for closing only represents when shops are supposed to close, and it is frequently from thirty minutes to an hour later before leaving the shop, especially during sales, stock-takings, and summer months.

William Atkinson N., Hammersmith, age 21, draper. I have



been in three different places of business. I served my apprenticeship and remained upon salary in the first place in all for seven years, The Arcade, Armagh, Ireland. There we came in to business at half-past 8 in the morning, and left off at 6 o'clock in the winter, and 7 in the summer, Tuesdays and Saturdays excepted; 9 o'clock on Tuesdays, 10 on Saturdays. I then came to Brentford. I had to be in the shop at half-past 7 every morning, and never got out earlier than half-past 9, Saturdays 12 o'clock. As to meals, hurry down as sharp as you can, and thank your stars if you are not called up before you have had time to make a hasty meal to serve customers or something else, and go up afterwards to find everything cold. Not quite so strong as I should like to be, or would be under different treatment. I have bad digestion, got to aid it with tonics. My feelings are something pitiable compared with what they were when I had decent hours. Then I went to church twice on a Sunday, and to Sunday-school twice as well. Now I sit by the fire reading an exciting novel every winter Sunday; summer Sundays seek excitement of another nature. Can't seem to enjoy anything wholesome or necessary in the way of religion; want something more highly spiced than religion, some comicality to make me laugh and thus forget my fetters. It would be worse than madness to worry a mind already harassed beyond its strength by trying to cultivate it. No time to attend lectures, no, no, no. I live on the premises. There are five males and five females, four under twenty, six above. I have had three weekly half-holidays, then they vanished. If you can draw an inference from standing on each foot alternately and bearing the extra weight with your arms on some goods on the counter, not only the last two hours of business, but when an opportunity presents itself throughout the day, you will then know our feelings. I know several cases of serious illness through exhaustion. If you have spoken to any number of ordinary shop assistants whose hours are long, you will have observed that we are fluent enough upon anything closely related to our particular business, but beyond that, as a rule, our ignorance is the chief feature. We don't know anything of what is going on around us. It would be very risky for one desirous to get on in life to attempt to pay any attention whatever but to the one thing in which he wished to succeed, because the mind and body are so thoroughly exhausted that it would only be dividing a house against itself, which could not stand. Therefore we either grow up shamefully ignorant of everything but one thing, or else we know a little, or rather get a little in our heads and less in our pockets.

William S., Meeting House Lane, Peckham, age 17, boot trade. Hours have always been from 8 A.M. till 9.30 P.M., and on Saturdays 11.30 P.M. An hour for dinner, and half for tea. Have



enjoyed good health to the present time. No time to attend lectures, and very little for reading. Do not live on the premises. There are two assistants besides myself. We have an evening once a fortnight. The 5 o'clock movement did not last longer than eight weeks.

Chas. M., Peckham, age 35, shoemaker's assistant. My hours are 8.30 to 9.10, Saturday 11 P.M. Most assistants suffer from swelling of the feet and legs. I think that legislative action is necessary to accomplish that which it has done in the case of factories, &c. None would really object.

F. G., Tottenham Court Road, age 21. Been at Holloway Road, Pitfield St., Kingsland, and at Brighton. Places of business previous to this were from 8 till 8, and 5 on Thursdays. Hours in present place are from 7.30 till 9, and 10 on Saturdays. Half-an-hour allowed for each meal. At the present time I do not feel at all well. When finished work at night it seems the only place of comfort is bed, and on Sundays I am always anxious to get a bit of fresh air. I live on the premises. About twenty hands. Places previous have had the 5 o'clock on Thursday, but at the present time no holiday allowed whatever. I have seen most cases where young men suffer from their feet, which is nearly as bad as a disease.

Charles P., Oxford Street, London, draper, age 25. I have been at Nottingham nine years; Sheffield, six months; Oxford St., W., three years. Nottingham, commence 8.30, close at 8 P.M., 10 on Saturday; (2) commence 8 A.M., close 11 P.M., on Saturday 11.30; (3) commence 7.30, close 8 P.M., Saturday 7.30. The time allowed in most establishments would be about fifteen minutes, although in some thirty minutes is allowed for each meal. Good health when I first commenced business, but for the last four years have been obliged to have medical advice. Having had favourable hours I do not feel ill effects, but to the want of sufficient time for meals I attribute dyspepsia, from which I suffer. If I had more opportunity of going into the fresh air, am convinced that the extra energy would compensate for the shorter time. Sunday being the only day available for procuring the necessary amount of fresh air, should not feel justified in attending so confined a place as a church regularly. Have very little time to attend lectures, and art classes; have been unable to attend at all, they commencing previous to our closing time. I live on the premises. Number employed, ten—five males, five females. As to holidays, we have one evening each fortnight; at Nottingham, half-day on Thursday is still continued. I know of many cases where assistants have been obliged to leave business altogether through ill health wholly caused by long hours, and one or two cases of overwork, one of actual death. One of my friends, a grocer, through severe work



during the Christmas trade had his health completely ruined, and the medical man who attended him attributed his death, which occurred shortly afterwards, wholly to overwork. The busiest times are 11 A.M. to 1 P.M., and 3 P.M. to 6 P.M. Am thoroughly convinced that the whole of trade might be done previous to 6 P.M., and one late night per week. The causes are the keen competition of tradesmen and want of combination of assistants, and the impossibility of persuading every employer to close at a fixed time. The failure of the weekly holiday caused in a great measure by difficulty of arranging different districts, and the various trades to close on one uniform day. I am convinced that after an experience of ten years, as an active worker and canvasser in causes of early closing, of the impracticability of closing shops earlier by moral suasion, because one tradesman will almost invariably keep the whole of a town open. The only remedy I am certain is an Act of Parliament to close shops at a uniform hour, or an extension of the Factory Act to the assistants. Late shopping can be prevented in one way, and one way only, and that is by closing the door.

James B., Walworth Road, age 39, oilman (manager). Been at George Street, Lower Kensington Land, Walworth Road. Hours, 8 A.M. till 10 P.M. ; on Saturdays, 8 A.M. till 12 P.M. Half-an-hour for breakfast, about three quarters of an hour for dinner, half-an-hour for tea, including calls to serve. Have had many attacks of indigestion, but am now well. I feel very tired at night, especially during the summer months, and often fagged out especially on Saturday nights. I usually attend a place of worship on Sunday mornings, but generally drop off to sleep. I live on the premises. There are two males, both under twenty.

J. D., Queen Road, Peckham, age 22. Commence 8 A.M., leave 9.30 P.M., present one ; last place, 8 P.M. No particular time for meals, when finished go straight to shop. Have no ailments whatever. My feelings are very tired, depressed mind, rather lie down than go out on Sundays. A fine of sixpence is enforced if not out by 10.50 A.M., second time dismissed. I live on the premises. There are eight assistants. Twelve months ago we closed early for a few weeks, until some of our neighbours broke through, and we were obliged to do the same.

Thomas W., Southwark Park Road, Bermondsey, age 24, oil and colour trade. I have been in six places in the course of eight and a half years. I begin business at 8 o'clock A.M. and leave at 10 o'clock P.M. ; 8 A.M. till 12 o'clock P.M., Saturdays. My third situation, from 7.30 till 11 o'clock every day, and Saturday 7 A.M. till 12 P.M. I have never been allowed any time for meals, but have always had my food on the counter serving customers, and getting my food between times. My present situation I get my food



as I please. In my third place, I had nine weeks illness owing to long hours, and being stinted in food. I now feel well and strong. The effect I feel from the want of fresh air and exercise is a nasty heavy feeling in the morning, when I feel it almost impossible to get up. As a rule I feel too tired to undress to go to bed ; I feel as if I could as well lie on the counter and sleep as if I was in bed. As for attending a place of worship it is out of the question, not but what I should be pleased to go ; when in the country I went twice every Sunday.

William J. P., Lower Marsh, Lambeth, age 31, hatter. In three places. Commenced work at 7.30 A.M., closed at 10.30 P.M., at Commercial Road ; 8.30 A.M., closed 10 P.M., at Lower Marsh ; 8 A.M., closed 10 P.M., at Kingsland. Saturdays, 12 o'clock. I have had no breakfast time allowed me. We were supposed to have one hour for dinner, but it seldom exceeded half-an-hour, being called away three or four times; half-an-hour for tea. During the last two or three years I suffer from dimness of sight, through gas being burnt all day long, and the ceiling being very low. Very often, after we have closed, I feel so languid, that as soon as I sit down I fall to sleep. After each day's work feel quite done up. On Saturday, for I do not leave the shop all day, having my meals in a corner of the shop, the best way I can, and what with so much running about, at closing time I am hardly able to place one foot before the other. Quite unfit to go to any place of worship on Sunday. Do not sleep on the premises. There are no females. Males—three under twenty, and three over twenty. Our Thursday evening closing lasted only ten weeks. I have frequently seen the ill effects of long hours on my fellow shop assistants. I have very often known them to be taken out of the shop in a fainting condition.

George W. N., grocer, age 25, Lower Marsh, Lambeth, S.E. Been at Brompton Road, Bayswater, and Tottenham Court Road. My hours now are from 8.15 A.M. to 9.15 P.M. (outdoors); Fridays, 10 P.M. ; Saturdays, 12 P.M. Bayswater earlier—indoor situation, commencing 7.30 A.M. to 8 P.M. Indoor—half-hour for dinner, twenty minutes for tea. Outdoor—three-quarter hour for dinner, half-hour for tea. I was considered to have very good health and very strong when first I entered the trade, but do not, and have not enjoyed good health now. I feel very much from the want of fresh air and outdoor exercise. Saturdays and other busy times I do not get sufficient time for meals. I live on the premises here, because I am manager, but the other assistants live out. There are two other assistants under twenty. I myself never had a weekly half-holiday. The only holiday I have had is by asking as a favour. I have observed the effect of long hours and standing. Have known many young men, under twenty, not able to



get their shoes on their feet, and also leave their situations to go home in the country, as it has been too trying for their constitutions. One young man (under twenty), at Tottenham Court Road, stayed from business two days because of the long hours, and his wages was stopped because, as the master said, he could not afford to pay men when they were ill, and finally had to give up. Respecting these three situations I have mentioned—Brompton Road, we there commenced, four months before Christmas, to work from twelve midnight, after Sunday was over, until half-past nine the next night; out of that we had thirty minutes for breakfast, three-quarters of an hour for dinner, twenty minutes for tea; the remaining part of the week we usually worked until two and three o'clock. At Bayswater the hours were much shorter. We commenced at nine o'clock until half-past six; and half-past two on Saturdays. There I enjoyed very good health, being able to join the Volunteers, which is, without doubt, such exercise as young men require in London; at the same time the work was done as required. At Tottenham Court Road we commenced at half-past eight till half-past nine; Fridays, ten; Saturdays, half-past eleven. Christmas time we worked most nights, three months before Christmas, until one, two, and three o'clock. Several young men, not able to stand the hours, broke down, and in consequence were discharged after Christmas, because it was stated they were not strong enough after about sixteen or seventeen hours hard work per day.

William R. C., Queen's Road, Peckham, S.E., age 24, grocer's assistant. In business at Buckhurst Hill, 8 A.M. to 8 P.M.; at Walthamstow, 7.30 A.M. to 9 P.M.; at Woodford, 8 A.M. to 8 P.M. (sometimes later); at present, commence business at 7.30 A.M., leave work at 9.30 P.M. On Saturdays, 7.30 A.M. to 12 P.M. Man standing hour after hour must necessarily be tired, and the non-enjoyment of fresh air must tell upon a man's constitution sooner or later. The mind at the end of the day's labour does not seem fit to entertain itself, its sole crave is rest. It is in my opinion the duty of every right-minded young man in the United Kingdom to help forward this great work. Those that are married could give more time to their wives and children and to their homes; the young men who are not, could give their time to study and to their advancement in life. The mechanic and the clerk have time to recruit their health and exercise themselves, but the assistant can only take his cheerless walk at the late hours of 10 P.M. and 11 P.M. Why should the assistant wait longer? has he not tarried long enough already? has he not the feelings of other men? why should he still be the slave of toil?

William H. B., Queen's Road, Peckham, age 21, provision hand. In situations at Deptford and Brockley. Both previous situations



begin at 7.30 and leave at 9.30, or later; Saturday, 12 o'clock. Begin now at 7.30, and leave at 9.30; 12 o'clock on Saturdays. Twenty minutes for breakfast, thirty for dinner, and forty minutes for tea, a wash, &c., being included in that time. I live on the premises. Four assistants employed—young men; one under twenty; also three outdoor assistants. All the young men I know in the trade complain of the one thing—long hours.

William S., age 19, grocer's assistant. I begin business at 7.30 A.M. and leave at 9.30 P.M. Leave off on Saturdays at 12 P.M. Twenty minutes for breakfast, thirty minutes for dinner, forty minutes for tea, including a wash and brush up, &c. On an average I have good health, but at times I suffer from the effects of the long hours. I have bad feet from standing so many hours, and I always welcome meal times. At the end of the day I do not feel fit for study of any kind. Saturday night, or rather Sunday morning, I only feel fit for bed; and hardly care to attend a place of worship in the morning. I do not live on the premises. Four persons employed (young men); also three outdoor assistants. We have one evening once a fortnight, leaving business about 6 P.M. Did not have a holiday in previous situation. I know several in the trade, and they all complain that the long hours are telling upon their constitution. I earnestly urge all young men of this metropolis of ours, to help to forward this great and noble work.

H. S., Bermondsey, age 27, grocer's assistant. Been in five places. My hours were: (1) 7.30 A.M. till 9 P.M.; Fridays, 10 P.M.; Saturdays, 12 P.M. (2) 7.30 A.M. till 9.30 P.M. (3) 7.30 A.M. till 9.30 P.M. (4) 7.30 A.M. till 9.30 A.M. Present time, 8 A.M. till 7.30 every night. Meal times—breakfast, twenty minutes; dinner, half-an-hour; tea, twenty minutes, and often called out to serve customers in meal times. I feel weakness of chest, bad digestion; medical men say this is for the want of fresh air and proper exercise. I lived on the premises at the first four; average employed, two to twenty-two, majority under twenty. Present situation, fifty employed, majority over twenty. I have known many who have had to leave their situations through swollen legs and weak ankles, also many who have left because they could not stand so many hours' confinement. The first place I had we were not allowed out, only on a Sunday, except by special permission; we also had to stop in one Sunday as our turn came round, to attend to the door, so that sometimes it was a fortnight before we could get any exercise whatever. The next, although better in some respects, was worse in others; for instance, there was no woman kept in the house, so that two or three nights a week we had to make our own beds, or get into them just as we left them in the morning, which was mostly the case, because we generally were too tired to trouble about making them. My present situation



is the best that I know of in the trade. Our hours are reasonable, we get an hour for dinner, half-an-hour for tea. But it has not always been the same ; for instance, they used to close at 11 on Saturday nights, now it is 7.30. This has been gradually brought about with an increasing business, and I think this clearly proves that there is no occasion to keep shops open so late as they are at present. I have also noticed that those who do the largest business close the earliest, and employ the oldest men, therefore those who have the longest hours are the youngest in the trade, hence the result.

Owen D., Mile End Road, age 23, grocer. Been in three situations. In my first situation the hours were from 7.30 till 11, five days in the week ; Saturday, until 12 o'clock. My second, the hours were from 7.15 till 9.30, and on Saturday till 12 o'clock ; on Thursdays, 5 o'clock. My present place we work from 7.35 till 9.30, and Saturdays until 12. Meals, twenty-five minutes each. When I first went into business I enjoyed good health, but latterly subject to attacks of nervous debility. I feel very depressed at times through the long hours. We are worn out at close of business. I live on the premises with one more, male, age 18. If I had no prospect of getting in business for myself, I would not stop in the trade another month. I would sooner by far be a farm-labourer, than be penned in a shop fourteen, fifteen, and sixteen hours a day. It makes life miserable, and drives all ambition out of one.

Horace B., Whitechapel Road, E., age 21, grocery. I have been at Sedlescomb, Battle ; Hastings ; Wells ; Seaside, Eastbourne. At each of these places I was expected in the shop at 7 in the morning till 8.30 and 9 in the evening in the week, and till 11 P.M. on Saturdays. I now start business at 7.45 in the morning, and do not finish till 9.30 up to Thursday, 10 and 10.30 on Friday, and 12 o'clock on Saturday. The average time that I have been allowed for meals has been twenty-five minutes. When I first went into the trade I was in perfect health, but now I am sorry to say I am troubled with sundry complaints, which I attribute to long standing, etc. After closing I feel tired and not fit for anything but bed, and as to taking exercise, I could not walk a mile without pain. As to meals, I find that my appetite is failing for want of proper time to eat my meals. My bodily feelings, after closing on a Saturday night, are that of a man who has had no rest for a week, languid and faint, generally a splitting headache. On a Sunday morning I neither feel fit for religious worship or anything else, but generally lie in bed till one o'clock P.M. I live on the premises. There are seven persons employed in the business, all males. There are four who are under twenty years of age, three who are over twenty. We



have no weekly half-holiday, and never had one. As to noticing the effect of long hours on my comrades, I notice it daily, especially one case of illness at present. As to the busiest part of the day, that seems to me a hard question to answer, to one in the grocery trade ; but there is no business done worth speaking of after eight in the evening. I believe it could be done in less hours. The cause of the long hours in my opinion is—1st. the large competition in trade ; 2d. the irregularity of shopkeepers in closing. I should say that the failure of the half-holiday motion, is owing to nearly the same cause as the long hours. I should most decidedly be satisfied, and should be able to take healthy exercise, both bodily and mentally, if the hours were limited to twelve a day, and a half-holiday each week.

John L., West Maitland Street, Edinburgh, age 33, licensed grocer. I was four years in first, three in second, and five years in last situation, previous to 1877, when I commenced business on my own account. We open at 8, shut at 8, Saturday at 10. First four years commenced at 7.30 A.M., and closed at 9.30 ; Saturday, 11 P.M. The second from 8 A.M. to 9 P.M. ; and Saturday, 11 P.M. The last from 8 A.M. to 8 P.M. ; Saturdays, 10 (being first hand in this last I personally had longer hours, generally to 9.30 and even 10 ; Saturdays earlier and later than the other). Breakfast before opening ; one and a quarter hours to dinner ; tea in shop, twenty minutes allowed. Same rule applies at present to situation I was last in. Have generally had good health. I certainly feel the ill effects, and particularly so when in last situation, where a low ceiling and much gas, when doors were shut, exhaustion soon followed. The day that we can say most fatigues us is the Saturday, and although I make a point of attending public worship twice and occasionally thrice on Sundays, feel that to enjoy such would need more rest. Few live on the premises in our trade. I have one clerk, female (hours 9.45 to 7.15, with two and a half hours off for meals) ; three assistants, van lad and boy. When in last situation tried to get half-holiday for the assistants, and did so for one winter and spring, but they did not appreciate it (at anyrate by not trying to meet any emergency they lost it). The hours certainly have a bad effect. Busy times vary with the district. Across the street from where my shop is, I understand busy time is from ten to five ; from ten to one, and from four to eight here ; and within one hundred yards on my other side, from eight to ten, from one to three, and from six to eight are the busiest. I have filled up this form although it is marked for assistants, because I have been on the Committee of the Assistants' Association since 1869, and have been for some years President of the same. The advantages of early closing are very apparent, but the greatest obstacles to it are those who have a little money but no experience going into business, and by their late hours keeping



others also. On the whole, however, hours are not nearly so long as they used to be. In the better class districts many of the shops have a little better hours, and in lower class they have later or longer.

James M., age 31, grocer's manager, South Bermondsey, S.E. I have worked at : 1st, Plumstead; 2nd, City; 3rd, Hammersmith, as manager; 4th, Old Kent Road; 5th, here. The hours are at all places, generally from 7.30 till 9.30, for five days; and 7.30 till 12 on Saturdays. Half-an-hour for each meal has been the general rule. I always had pretty good health until about four years ago, when I was knocked up for about a month with overwork, worry, and long hours; and ever since then I have felt the effects of long standing and want of fresh air and change. I live on the premises. There are two, and one boy.

F. K., High Street, Peckham, age 22, butcher's assistant. I have been in six different places. First place, week days, 7 till 9; Saturdays, 7 till 11. Second place, 5 till 9; Saturdays, 5 till 11. Third place, same as second. Fourth place, 6.30 till 9.15; Saturdays, 6 morning till 12 night. Fifth place, 5 morning till 10 night; Saturdays, 5 till 12. All with the exception of two places we were not allowed any time for meals, only time to bolt it. I have not had good health, although not been so bad as to leave work. I feel as if I don't want to go anywhere. Never go to church on account of having to work half day on Sunday, and then I generally rest the other half. I live on the premises. Four employed; three under twenty and two over.

William J. H., Commercial Street, Whitechapel, E. I am 19 years of age, and grocer by trade. I have been at Portobello Road, Notting Hill, W., in the grocery, then I came here. In my first place I went to work at a quarter to 8 in the morning, and left work half past 9, except Fridays and Saturdays; Friday, quarter to 8 in the morning till 10; Saturday, quarter to 8 till a quarter past 12. In this place about the same, except that we have to work some nights half-an-hour over the time mentioned. The time allowed for all meals in my places were and are twenty-five minutes. I was in perfect health when I came to my first place, but within a short time I found it was failing me, and have not felt well nor healthy since, nor do I now. In my opinion I should think that it is for want of shorter hours, so that we should not have so long to stand, and time to get fresh air and exercise, that we are not well nor healthy. I feel very tired and worn out at the end of the day, most days having the headache, or feeling ill in some other way. I have been so tired some Saturday nights that I have hardly felt able to walk home, and Sunday mornings I do not feel able to get up till one o'clock, and when up I am so tired and sleepy that I do not care about going anywhere. I do not know



any young men that can find time to go to meetings of any sort ; as to myself, I do not feel fit to go anywhere but to bed after I leave work. I live on the business premises. There are seven persons in the house ; four under twenty and three over twenty. We have no weekly half-holiday, and never had. I have very often had bad feet and legs through long standing and long hours. I know one young assistant very well that was very often taken ill through long standing ; he was taken ill a short while ago, and has died since Christmas. Can give name and address if required. We have five establishments where all the young men work the same number of hours, but are in hope with your help to get shorter soon. I know young men who often work twenty hours a day.

Will. Thos. M., Cross Street, Tyers Street, Lambeth, 21 years of age, corn merchant's assistant. I have been in two shops : four and a half years in first situation, five and a half in the present one. In first I used to begin at 7 in the morning and leave off at half past 10 at night ; and Saturday, half past 12 at night. In present I begin at 7 in the morning and leave at 8 in the evening ; on Saturday at 9 at night. The first place that I was in I used to have to get up about a dozen times while having dinner, because there was no allotted time. In the present one, I get half-an-hour each meal. I have good health now, only I think it has stopped my growth, through being in gas so many hours at night. I have got a little round shouldered through not getting enough exercise. I have time to attend a meeting, but it is half over before I can get there. I do not live on the premises. There are two employed, males ; none under twenty, but two over. I have never had a half-holiday weekly, but the master would look black if you ask him for an hour or two in the evening too often.

William George S., Upper Marsh, Lambeth, S.E., age 31, tailor's assistant. Been in both wholesale and retail ; will specify last three. Lower Marsh, Lambeth, 8.30 A.M. to 10 P.M. ; Saturday, 8.30 A.M. to 1 A.M. ; on Sunday ; Sunday, 2.30 P.M. Brompton Road, 9 A.M. to 9 P.M. ; Saturday, 11 P.M. Lower Marsh, Lambeth, at present, 9 A.M. to 9.30 P.M. ; Saturday, 11.30 P.M. ; Sunday, 1.30 P.M. I find that the confinement and want of fresh air causes a craving for stimulants. I find that when the excitement of business is over, that I am not inclined to make any exertion whatever. If I went to a place of worship I should go to sleep. I do not live on the premises. There are six males, one under twenty. Have seen men if left to themselves continually going to sleep. Have had under my notice numerous cases of men dying of consumption at an early age, from shop work. There will always be a difficulty in getting shops closed early in a poor neighbourhood, unless some



pressure could be brought to bear upon the British workman, either through their trades-unions or similar organisations. For I find the last customers I serve on a Saturday night are men who have left off their work at twelve or one o'clock in the day, and usually they are under the influence of drink ; and should I not be able to suit them, I get the polite intimation that as the shop is open on Sunday morning they will look in then, and a nice state they are in when they come. Should say close the shop at ten on Saturday, close it entirely on Sunday, and our customers will come before they have spent a lot of money in drink, which would pay both themselves and shopkeepers best.

Robert M., Westminster Bridge Road, age 41, salesman in the shoe trade. Been in three large boot shops. In all, the hours about the same, except in —, from 8.30 A.M. till 9.30 or 10 P.M.; on Saturday, from 8.30 A.M. till 11.30 or 12 P.M. Have felt the effects of long hours and the gas to a very great extent. Meal times I do not find fault with, but standing and other injurious things, such as gas, plenty of draughts, and very little fresh air, has had ill effects. When I leave off work, I do not feel inclined to go out, but straight to bed, and rather lie in bed than go to church, though I pluck up courage to go sometimes. I live on the premises—three under twenty, four over. We had Thursday from five o'clock for about two months, but the time was wasted running about trying to persuade others to close ; but a few were pigheaded, and the result was we all opened again. I have noticed alarming effects on some, one at the present time in a state of monomania, and on several premature old age ; also tender feet, for in our trade when we commence business we have not five minutes rest except meal times. One case I nearly forgot, he died of consumption in the Lambeth Infirmary. In the evening after gas is alight in the summer, the heat is intense. If all closed at eight o'clock, and ten on Saturday, not only the same amount of trade could be done, but I believe more. The working-class that leave off at one, they spend the principal part of their money in the public-house, then when we ought to be closing come for the cheapest goods they can get, because they have wasted the bulk of their earnings. The cause is through a few miserly shopkeepers who, like a lot of cats, look through the window to see which jumps off the wall first, then they stop five minutes longer, so that eventually they have all stopped where they were at first. I was at the Albert Hall on both demonstrations, and think that by sticking hard and fast to our undertaking, we shall eventually gain our end.

W. E., Westminster Bridge Road, age 24, clothier's assistant. 9 A.M. till 9 P.M. ; Friday, 9.30 : and 11.30 on Saturday. Breakfast, twenty minutes ; dinner and tea, half-an-hour. I suffer from want of outdoor exercise. I live on the premises. There are eighteen



males, six under twenty. Have known a great number suffering from bad legs, and one death from consumption.

Henry B., Grandby Street, Bethnal Green Road, age 19, clothier's assistant. Only my present situation, which I have been in five years. The hours are from 8.30 A.M. till 10 P.M., frequently much later; Saturdays, 8.30 A.M. till 12.30 P.M.; on Sunday, 8.30 A.M. till 2.30 P.M. Half-an-hour each meal, and oftentimes called up several times during my meals to serve customers. I was in perfect health when first I went to business, and now I am subject to severe colds and slight touch of rheumatism in the feet. I feel low-spirited, in fact, bodily ill. Working on Sunday I have not the time to go to church. Don't sleep upon the premises, but get my food, &c., on the premises. Three with myself under twenty, and two over twenty. I know several men that suffer from bronchitis and rheumatism brought on by long standing in a heated shop and going out in the night air.

George M., Hard Street, Walworth, S.E., age 22, clothier's assistant. I lived at Lower Marsh, Lambeth, six years. I have been at my present situation about nine months. I used to begin at 8.30 in the morning, and was supposed to leave off at 10 P.M., but which frequently reached 11 P.M.; on Saturdays, 12 P.M., oftentimes one o'clock in the morning; on Sunday I commenced at 8.30 A.M. and left off at 2.30 P.M. Living out of the house, I had my breakfast before I went. One hour for dinner, half-an-hour for tea, but which did not really amount to more than fifteen minutes each meal, being called upon several times to serve customers during my meals. I frequently suffer with bronchitis, and frequently have to stay away from business. I feel low-spirited, tired, and exhausted. On Saturday night or Sunday morning I frequently, when going home, sit on a doorstep and rest myself. I have not a weekly half-holiday. I had one fifteen months ago, but it only lasted about four weeks. I have observed the effect of long hours, and will mention the cases of three assistants; the first died of bronchitis, brought on by long standing in a heated atmosphere, and then suddenly going out in the night air; the second died of rheumatism and gout, brought on by long standing out on the damp stones, trying to get customers in to buy; the third died through a fall while in drink, the craving for drink being brought on by long and excessive hours, and mental depression. I am of opinion that to shorten the hours of labour, cannot be brought about but by legislation, and that no Bill taken before the House of Commons will be complete without it includes the total abolition of Sunday trading. I may here remark, that I left my last situation through my employer keeping me till eleven o'clock at night the week following last Whitsuntide, having worked the fortnight previous to Whitsuntide every night until



twelve o'clock; and I may also here mention, that we work Christmas Day, Boxing Day, Good Friday, Easter Monday, Whitsuntide, and August Bank holiday, until three o'clock in the day.

John Wells S., Albany Road, Old Kent Road, age 33, tailor's assistant. Been at Lower Marsh, Lambeth, and four and a half years in the above situation. Commence business at 8.30 A.M. and leave at 9.30 P.M., from Monday till Friday; and on Saturday, 8.30 A.M. till 11.30; on Sunday, 8.30 till 1 P.M. I was in good health when I entered a house of business eighteen years ago, but now I suffer with a sluggish liver from too much confinement and gas, and lassitude. My meal times are sufficiently allowed for, as I have them out. I get languid at the end of the day, and headache. When I leave business and by the time I reach home it is bed time. I do not live on the premises, a long way off. There are six, all males, one under twenty and five over. I have noticed the ill effects of long hours in many instances. I have known three assistants die in this trade, all having worked for the same employer, from what I consider a continuance of overwork and long hours; and many other cases I could mention in other trades. I consider that if we had shorter hours and Sundays to ourselves we should be able to do our work better. If employers had a stated time for closing at night we could do all the business between breakfast and 8 P.M. Every assistant, apprentice, or improver should have at least one hour to dinner, half-an-hour to breakfast and half-an-hour to tea, and not be called from their meals to serve at all. I certainly believe that if employers studied their employés they would be studied by them in return. I am not able to spend one half hour with my children from Monday morning till 3 P.M. on Sunday. If I had Sunday morning I could go to church, and in the afternoon take my children for a little fresh air. We are paid nothing extra for Sunday work, but could get the same money for six days' work elsewhere. Being a married man, should I throw myself out of a situation I might be a long time getting another.

E. H. C., Argyle Road, Mile End Road, age 38, draper's assistant. Been in several large establishments, thirteen years in present situation. Commence business 8.45 A.M., leave 9.15 P.M., often 9.30 and 10 o'clock; Saturdays, 11 P.M., 11.30, and 12.15 previous to Bank holidays. Meals—Strict time, twenty minutes breakfast, dinner, and tea, ten minutes for supper Saturday night, no time allowed for supper other nights. When apprenticed was very healthy. I am far from strong now, having partly recovered from a long illness of congestion of the lungs. I am always tired, and feel too fatigued to take exercise in the fresh air when an opportunity offers. The time allowed for meals after waiting to be served cannot possibly give time for mastication, thereby causing



drowsiness, and the disinclination for business, the consequence of indigestion. Quite worn out, and it requires a great effort to attend a place of worship on the Sunday. By the time I reach home, 10 o'clock and 10.30 and 12.15 P.M., does not give one much leisure for lectures or thinking about my mind. I do not sleep on the business premises. There are six females, twelve males, three females and two males under twenty. I knew one man who died of consumption. It is very difficult to answer this question, as when ill they are discharged (in the majority of cases), and we hear no more of them. I am quite sure that excessive hours of labour is the cause of premature death, great drunkenness, and infidelity.

Thos. M. L., High Street, Clapham, age 20, draper's assistant. I have been at Tottenham, Portsmouth, present situation. Tottenham, began 7.30 A.M., left off 8.30 P.M.; Portsmouth, began 7.45 A.M., left off 9.30 P.M.; Clapham, began 8 A.M., left off 8.30 P.M.; left off on Saturday at each establishment 10 o'clock. Meals—Average time taken, quarter of an hour. I am fairly well in health. My legs ache from long standing; have seen two doctors, who say it is for the want of rest. Bodily and mental feelings worn out. I live on the premises. Seven males, one female, four under twenty.

Marston O., High Street, Clapham, S.W., draper's assistant. At Wigston hours were from 7 A.M. to 8 P.M.; Saturdays, 7 A.M. to 9.45 P.M. At High Street, Clapham, 8 A.M. to 9 P.M.; Saturday, 8 A.M. to 10 P.M. No particular time allowed for meals, but about fifteen minutes to each meal is the general time taken. In good health when I went to it, and have enjoyed good health during all the time, and am now very well. I feel a little tired on Saturday evenings, but always attend a place of worship on Sunday mornings. I live on the premises. There are seven males employed here, two under twenty and five above. No weekly half-holiday; it continued about thirteen weeks during last winter.

Edward B., age 17, boot and shoe trade, Parkside Street, Battersea. Been here for three years, only that one. I begin at half-past eight, and leave at half-past nine at night, and 12 P.M. on Saturdays. I have breakfast before I start, an hour for dinner, and half-an-hour for tea. I have had good health, and am well and strong. I feel as if I want more exercise. I do not live on the premises. There are four employed, all males, two over twenty and two under. I have never had a weekly half-holiday. There are hundreds who are working day and night almost, and it is for them that I feel, and it will be the greatest blessing that has ever befel shop assistants when the movement succeeds, as I feel sure it will, and I thank you very much for doing your best to make it succeed.

Mr George P., age 18, grocer, East Street, Walworth. Been



here for three years. I begin in the morning at 7.30 and leave at 10 P.M. on every day, and on Saturday at 12.30, and sometimes until 1 o'clock on Sunday morning. A half-hour for each meal. The ill effects of long standing cause bodily pains, and I oftentimes think a breath of air would do me good. My bodily feelings are, on Saturday night tired and pains in the back, and on Sunday morning I feel more fit for lying in bed than going to a place of worship. I have no time whatever to attend any lectures; with me it is go to bed and sleep, and get up and work, from one week's end to another. I have no weekly half-holiday, nor ever had one. I should be very well satisfied, and should be able to take healthy exercise and cultivate my mind, if our hours were limited to twelve a day, and half-an-hour for each meal, and the weekly half-holiday.

Edward A., 34 Paragon Road, Hackney, age 34, grocer. Began at 8 A.M., left at 10 P.M., and 12 on Saturdays, in every place I have been in. Breakfast I have at home, and have a five-and-twenty minutes' walk to place of business, the consequence of which is I am at work the half hour the others are having theirs. Supposed to have half-an-hour for dinner and tea, but very often it is only twenty minutes, and have to get up from the meal six or eight times to serve customers the while. Was in perfect health when I first went to business; have had fairly good health ever since, but do not feel as well as I should like at the present time. Feet and legs ache, and I suffer from indigestion through having meals at such irregular hours, sometimes one, two, three, and as late as a quarter to four o'clock, breakfast at seven o'clock, and nothing between. On Saturday night I never arrive home before half-past twelve o'clock, and then feel thoroughly done up, and totally unfit to get up in time to go to a place of worship. No time whatever for meetings or lectures. It is simply get up, go to work, come home, and go to bed. Don't have time to see my children awake except once a week. Sleep at home. There are five males, one under twenty. Never had a weekly half-holiday; scarcely get a couple of hours of an evening once in about three months. I have noticed young men come into the place with full round cheeks, and leave shewing distinctly their cheek bones, through the hard work and long hours. The business we do could easily be done in much less time. The public are at fault to a very great extent, and the shopkeepers are to blame keeping their shops open to oblige those who prefer sticking in a public-house instead of getting their goods in. Some half dozen grocers in our immediate neighbourhood agreed to close at 9 P.M. instead of 10 P.M. four nights of the week. It has worked well for the last six months, but am afraid that it will burst up this week, for one of these give-away shops opened last Friday, and what is to prevent them from keeping open till ten or eleven if they choose. Nothing short of legislation will prevent that sort of thing.



James Henry S., clothier's assistant, Malpas Road, New Cross. I have been during twenty-eight year in Holborn and the Borough, and twenty-one years in present employment at Lower Marsh, S.E. My hours are at present, and for the last twenty-one years have been, from 8 A.M. until 10 P.M., Saturdays from 8 A.M. until 12 P.M. Meal times half-an-hour, but very seldom take more than fifteen or twenty minutes. I get fearfully languid, walk with difficulty, legs and feet swollen, bottom of feet covered with corns. Too tired to attend a place of worship, never go outside the door on Sundays. I live on the premises. There are about fifty males, no females; about one-third under twenty. We have no half-holiday, we had for about seven weeks. We nearly all have to cut our boots to give our feet ease; we have derangement of the liver through impure atmosphere; eye-sight bad through gas. Busiest time is 5 to 8 P.M. The cause of long hours is want of unity on the part of shopkeepers to close earlier, and competition. The working classes will shop as late as shopkeepers continue open.

S. W. S., draper's assistant, New Cross Road, age 21. In three places my hours have been 8.30 to 9.15; Saturdays, 8.30 to 11.15. 7.30 to 9.30; Friday, 10.30; Saturday, 11.30. 8 to 9.30; Saturday, 11. As to meals, we sit down and eat what we can, and get up and go to work. I suffer with the headache, also bronchitis and inflammation through the continuation of the draughts. I have scarcely known the time when I have been free from my legs and feet aching and from indigestion. On Saturday night I feel as if I must go to bed and could lie there for a week. I live on the premises. There are four females, one male—two over twenty, two under twenty. I know one young man through the long hours, when having to pass a doctor's examination to get into the Civil Service Stores, could not pass through his legs being so swollen through constant standing.

Giles R. W., Upper Street, Islington, N., grocery, age 16. The above is the only place I have yet had, and have been there nearly two years. We begin business at 7 o'clock each day, and leave at 9 o'clock; Saturdays at half-past 10 o'clock. My time allowed for each meal is half-an-hour, and it's five minutes' walk each way. Our long hours of course make us feel very tired, and it is very seldom I am up on Sunday morning in time for any place of worship. In many cases I think Sunday is made more a day's pleasure and anything but what it ought to be, as there is no other time to go out, or to attend lectures or anything of the kind. I lodge about five minutes' walk from the business premises. There are eight persons employed in the business, "all male, four of whom are over twenty years of age, and four under twenty years of age. We have not a weekly half-holiday now. We had one



which lasted about five weeks (before Christmas 1882). Our time is now spent in working and sleeping.

Henry S., High Street, Clapham, draper's assistant. In four places during five years my hours have been—Brompton, 8 A.M. to 8.30 P.M.; Ballynahinch, 7 A.M. to 8.30 P.M.; Clapham, 8 A.M. to 8.30 P.M.; Saturdays, 8.15 A.M. to 10 P.M. (same at each place). Average time is a quarter of an hour for each meal. I was well and strong at first, and have very good health now, except suffering from weak ankles. There are here seven males, one female—four under twenty. I had 5 o'clock closing for four months last summer, but was discontinued.

James C., age 23, grocer's assistant, Great Bland Street, Dover Road, Borough, S.E. I have been at Ludgate Hill four years, and Farringdon Street two years, and Exmouth Street two years. My hours have been at the various places from 8 A.M. till 8.30 P.M., 8 A.M. till 9 P.M., 8 A.M. till 8.30 P.M., Saturdays 8 A.M. till 12 P.M. In the house they only allow you twenty minutes for dinner, but you have to have your breakfast before you start, and get your tea the best way you can. I have had to get up and serve no less than twenty customers whilst having my tea. At Christmas time we get our meals anyhow. Before I came into business I enjoyed good health, but now when I wake of a morning I feel as if I had not been to bed at all. Occasionally I have both my legs swollen for a short time, and my feet are never free from aching. Fresh air I don't know what it is and exercise. Saturday night the gas is almost suffocating, and I can never get up on a Sunday morning to attend a place of worship. I think I am a worse scholar than in my school days. I don't live on the premises, and I am sorry for those who do. There are two males employed. Never had weekly half-holiday, but made several attempts to get it. I have known fellow-assistants when they are fresh from the country and have been in a London shop, fall off almost to skeletons. Twelve hours a day is quite long enough for an Englishman to work, and I also think we ought to be put on a line with the mechanics, who are limited to a certain number of hours a day, and if they work more they are paid so much an hour overtime.

Henry S., New Cross Road, age 22½, manager, branch boot-makers, son of proprietor, who is generally at head shop. Business hours from 8 A.M. to 10 P.M., generally 8.30 A.M. to 10 P.M.; Saturdays, 8 A.M. to 12 P.M. Breakfast, thirty minutes; dinner, sixty minutes; tea, thirty minutes. I feel aching of legs between knees and ankles, tender feet, general weariness after 7 P.M. No time whatever except by obtaining a brother not in business as a substitute, though I can do this at any time. One lad is employed, age seventeen. Hours similar to mine, though slightly shorter.



He has one evening weekly from 5 P.M., though previous to the Thursday movement he had two evenings from 6 P.M., but preferred the earlier time. An attempt was made to commence the closing this last autumn, but was unsuccessful, many being irritated by the knowledge that they had been bullied on opening in the spring. This bullying by over-zealous advocates no doubt has done a lot of harm in this and surrounding districts.

J. J. B., Tynemouth, North Shields. Having been a draper's assistant for nearly fifty years, I wish to say a word or two on my experience of the slavery of the majority of male and female shop assistants throughout our country. It is now nearly forty years since I left London, where I filled three situations, one in Holborn, and two at the West End. During a period of ten years, during my stay in London and my residence in the North, I have assisted in every early closing movement. While engaged in London, I never knew what it was to be out of the shop till after dark, even in the longest days of summer; and I fear that the same evil still exists to a large extent both in the country and London, and I am quite sure that this terrible evil will continue to exist until there is State legislation on the matter. In the North, to a large extent, the shops are closed at six in winter, and seven in summer, and from nine to eleven o'clock on Saturdays; but this does not always mean being done with work, and when the assistants get out of the shop, they are to a large extent so exhausted from fatigue, from irregularity in getting their meals, from breathing foul air for so many hours, and from so much talking, that they are altogether unfitted for recreation, improvement of mind, or even the enjoyment of rest. I am quite sure from long experience, that the slavery of the Southern States of America, could not have had a more deteriorating influence on the lives and happiness of its victims, than the present and past evil system of over-working male and female shop assistants in our own land. I would have you to remember that shop assistants are engaged in a most exhaustive work in carrying goods to and from customers, and often walking many miles a day, especially in large places of business, incessant talking, and the constant breathing of foul air and dust. It is not an uncommon thing for an assistant to be detained by a customer for one or two hours beyond the dinner hour, and then to be so exhausted as not to be able to take any refreshment but a cup of tea. It has been stated that 1000 shop assistants die from over-work every year, and from 3000 to 4000 laid aside utterly broken down. I believe that these numbers might be multiplied by four, and still be within the number. I hope you will excuse the liberty I have taken, and I pray God that your kindly efforts may be crowned with success and that I may yet be spared to see Government legislation to protect the rising generation.



S. J. E., Hotspur Street, Tynemouth, North Shields. I have assisted in early closing movements for close on fifty years, both in Liverpool, London, and Newcastle, but all has been in vain. To a large extent, the majority of the poor slaves in the drapery trade are to-day suffering as many privations and hardships as they were fifty years ago, and will continue to suffer until some legislation is enacted to put a stop to the terrible evils of the greater number of drapers' shops. During my experience, I have seen many distressing sights, but will only give you one. During my five years' stay in Liverpool, we never got out of the shop during the summer until eleven o'clock at night, except Saturdays. At that time, the work being done, the young men were allowed out for twenty or twenty-five minutes, when they were summoned to return; and as for the Sabbath Days, I will leave them for your imagination. I will D.V. see the late Secretary to the Early Closing Association for Newcastle on Monday, and see if we cannot start a branch of your invaluable League. I really believe that nearly all the large houses would support the League.

C. J., age 40, draper's assistant. Being well acquainted with the "oppressed" and "discontented," I would like to raise my voice in the midst of this "cry" of "death and disease behind the counter." We have almost forgotten the word "slavery;" happily a curb is put upon this crime. Who will raise a strong arm to put down a species of white slavery? to help hard driven salesmen and saleswomen, barmaids, &c. Is it true we differ from slaves only (to use one writer's remark) in two respects, being exempt from "flogging," and "barter in human life?" Having been sixteen years one of the crowd of witnesses, at three separate dates being compelled to give up through ill-health resulting from over-taxation in business, long hours, and bad sanitary arrangements. Only three months since, I was obliged to leave one of the best employers and employment. We only worked from eighty to eighty-four hours per week (except on special holiday occasions, then eighty-eight to ninety hours per week), and this all the year round. I would gladly lend my pen, and brain, and voice, to help to bring about a reconciliation between employers, employés, and the public, on behalf of the "oppressed" justly "discontented" saleswomen and salesmen behind our counters.

"A host of Ribbonites, yet there is not  
One piece of 'Irish' in our agitation."

Having been in an establishment where over one hundred hands are employed, and usually catering for about forty hungry assistants, whose only chance of sitting during the day is twenty minutes at each meal, and that punctuality rigidly enforced, I think I have a fair knowledge of the existing evil in business houses, where many



are driven to excesses, after the labours of the long day indoors are over, and England's fair daughters are slowly, many alas ! rapidly ruining health and strength for this short life. Surely there is urgent need of speedy reform.

A. A. C., age 30, draper's assistant. The *Christian Chronicle*, in quoting from some correspondence in the *Daily Chronicle* on the subject of long hours, pungently says :—"The main cause of the social evil has been exposed." As one practically acquainted with life behind the counter, I can testify to the truth of that statement. I have even heard lady assistants enviously compare their daily life with that of the demi-monde. I have seen in South London, girl apprentices of thirteen measuring stock until 2 A.M., for a fortnight at a stretch. A young man living in Holloway—hours, 7.15 A.M. to 9.30 P.M.,—after three months in situation desired a half-holiday ; had to ask shop-walker, buyer, manager, clerk, &c. ; only granted on condition that it should be deducted from his salary, though paid by the year. I had a female cousin died lately, the doctor stated through long hours. An old shop assistant is a rarity. Assistants are fined if they are a minute late in the morning, but they never know for certain at what hour they may leave in the evening. If they try to attend the week-night religious meetings, they only arrive in time to pass a vote of thanks, or sing the Doxology. The Colonies do not require shop assistants. As far as Trades' Unionism is concerned, last year a Union was started in the East of London, and is already a thing of the past.

Henry H., draper's assistant, Bayswater. Knowing you are anxious to gain all the information you can to further your praiseworthy endeavours in the "Early Closing Movement," I beg respectfully to inscribe the following facts, for publication if you think necessary, at the meeting to be held to-morrow. I entered the above department of Mr — in November 1883, since which time I have worked continually underground in gas-light from 8 o'clock in the morning until 8.30, 9, and even 10 P.M. (the only relaxation being 30 minutes for dinner and 15 minutes for tea), and on Saturdays until 5 and 5.30 P.M. I was, when I entered the establishment, only 5 months ago, a hearty and healthy young fellow, now I am continually suffering from severe headaches, dimness of sight, and cannot eat my meals, and other symptoms of debility arising from confinement and working in the gas. During the late busy season it was quite pitiable to see some of the young ladies and poor fellows walking about mechanically, instead of briskly as though they had some life and energy in them ; and you could overhear such remarks as "this is like slavery," and "when I came here I thought I was coming to a respectable house ; however I must put up with it during the busy



season." But at the end of the busy season they were very much mistaken, it being as late as ever before we finished, as some of them found to their cost, there being as many as eight and ten seriously indisposed in one week, and for six and seven to leave in a day on account of the way they were kept at work and the number of hours was a common occurrence, consequently throwing the work of the largest department in the establishment upon the shoulders of the few who were left, and who either had no friends in town to whom to go or could not afford to lose their livelihood, and new hands could not be engaged for this department on account of having heard of the number of hours and the hard work, under which some of the strongest have succumbed. The foregoing are, I can assure you, positive facts, which I shall, if required, be pleased to substantiate personally with witnesses, as I think it is not generally known to the public, it being prominently published on almost every sheet of notepaper that leaves the firm that we close on Saturdays at 2 o'clock. So we do the shops, but there is as much work done after the shops are closed, both in the week and on Saturday, as is done any Saturday before closing.

C. B., draper, Commercial Road. I have questioned most of our men on the subjects of ventilation, &c., on which information is required, and find the greatest grievance is that in many houses there are double beds, and a man much prefers a single bed, for good reasons, and the sanitary arrangements are nearly always insufficient, as the house of business is often a private residence converted into a business establishment, and afterwards enlarged and altered to suit the business and to accommodate a larger number of hands, and all sanitary contrivances left in their original condition, which, although sufficient for a private house, is inadequate for a business establishment. The greatest evils arise from the long hours. I think that every house employing more than, say, ten hands, should have a room fitted up as a bath-room.

H. S., grocer, Commercial Road. You must excuse my not replying to yours earlier ; but, in the first place, I have been waiting to see how one man employed in our firm was getting on in health, and am sorry to say there is no improvement in his health, neither is there likely to be ; and I must say that in my opinion the serious illness is brought on entirely by the effects of gas and bad ventilation, although our establishment is a palace compared to some of them about London, especially the time in our house ; being, for married men, from half-past eight until nine o'clock, which really means half-past ; for single men, from a quarter to eight until the same time ; and apprentices, from half-past seven to the above time. But I have lived in one house where the time was from half-past seven till ten every day, except Saturdays, and then we had the advantage of midnight before getting finished. Besides this I know of many others as bad.



W. F. C., draper's assistant, Walworth Road. At the age of sixteen I was apprenticed to a firm of retail drapers in Kensington. The apprentices had to be in business at 7 A.M. We had from 8.30 to 9 A.M. for breakfast. The time specified for meals was thirty minutes for dinner, and twenty minutes for tea, but we were frequently called forward when we had not been half that time. We closed at 9 P.M. on five days of the week, and 10 P.M. on Saturday; but I, as cashier, was not allowed to commence balancing the books until I had wrapped up the goods and the rest were gone. I used frequently to be in the desk till 1 A.M., and on Sunday mornings till 2 and 3 A.M. I have had to go out with parcels to places two miles distant from the shop after 12 P.M. on Saturday, and then finish the desk work on my return. During the eleven months I was there, I was subjected by my employer to all the petty annoyances and foul language that he was capable of employing. As a trivial instance of the treatment I received, I may mention that because there was a particular kind of pudding that I could not eat, I was not allowed to have any at all. As I had been accustomed to farm life, the long hours of confinement soon told upon my health, and I was obliged to leave. A case of cruelty to a lady assistant came under my notice at the same establishment. The young lady was unwell and obliged to keep her room for a day. The next morning a doctor was called in, who said that she must on no account be moved; whereupon our worthy employer said that she was of no use to him if she could not work, and sent her home. I lived for twelve months in a retail house in South London. The hours we worked there were eighty per week, thirteen on five days, and fifteen on Saturdays. In that house there were about ten boys from twelve to fourteen years of age, and several girls the same age. The time allowed for meals was thirty minutes for dinner, and thirty for tea. Only one plate of meat was allowed for dinner, and that was the only time we had meat during the day. There was seldom any pudding, and the meat being always the same the lady assistants got so tired of it, that I know several of them went for weeks without a bit of meat, except what they bought for themselves, or had when out on Sundays. Tea was served from 4 to 5 P.M., that on Saturdays we frequently, in the busy seasons, worked from that time till 12 P.M. without having time to get a bit to eat or drink, and even then sometimes everything was cleared away, so that we had either to go out and get some or wait till breakfast time on Sunday morning. On one occasion a young lady who asked for something when we got out at 12 P.M., was refused, and being overcome with heat and fatigue, fainted away. I have in my short experience known many cases of lady assistants, who have been behind the counter several years, who have been continually under the doctor's hands solely on account of overwork and confinement in close and unhealthy shops.



F. H., Stoke Newington, said, I am a draper. I have been in the drapery trade twenty-one years—in Maidstone, Hastings, and Ramsgate, but principally London; about thirteen years in London. I was in the West End for six years, and the remainder of the time I have been in the South and East, where I was an apprentice. I worked from seven in the morning till nine at night, and 11 P.M. on Saturday for four years. During that time I had no fixed half-holidays. I then came into the West End of London, where the hours were from eight in the morning until seven at night and 2 P.M. on Saturday. These are the hours that ought to be general. I then went to the South of London. The hours there were from 7 A.M. to 9.30 P.M. in the summer; in winter until 8.30, and 10.30 P.M. on Saturday. In the evenings we were frequently detained fully half an hour in order to re-arrange the stock. I then returned to the East End of London, where the hours are from 7 A.M. to 9.15 P.M. and 10.30 P.M. on Saturdays; but the majority of the shops are open till nearly twelve o'clock on Saturdays, and past ten upon other evenings. Our shop is one of the best in the locality, and closes as early as any of the drapers'. We have had the Thursday five o'clock closing since June last. This was procured through the action of myself and Mr Grimmer. My opinion is, that the great curse of our trade is drink, undoubtedly caused through late hours, as the men, when they leave the shop, jaded and worn, fly to stimulants, and many of the really good business men in the east end are discharged through drink alone, which I attribute to long hours. In the west end this feature is almost entirely absent. I have known, in my experience, a great many young men and boys who have been compelled to relinquish the trade altogether, their health being entirely broken up through the late hours. My opinion is that a very great amount of suffering exists amongst the young ladies through swollen legs and veins, and many have been obliged to leave their situations, and many are suffering severely. Having no knowledge of any other business, they are thus debarred from earning a living. I have no idea what the percentage of mortality is amongst drapers, but my opinion is that few drapers' assistants insure their lives. I believe long hours seriously impair the morals of the young men, though the same, I am happy to say, cannot be said of the young ladies. Speaking for myself, I find that directly business is over I am absolutely good for nothing. On Sunday I only feel fit for bed most part of the day. The men in shops in the east end are unable to join the Volunteer Corps, as they have no time at their disposal. On many subjects I can form no opinion whatever, since I have no time for reflection. Young ladies in shops seldom have, or are, indeed, allowed to have seats. I have had much illness during the course of my life, and attribute it indirectly to long hours. I am very subject to colds, not being able to guard myself against sudden changes of atmosphere. I generally notice



that, as a rule, young persons, male and female, are healthy when they first come up from country ; but they break down soon after completing their apprenticeship. At the present time I know a manager who has been informed by his doctor that he breathes through only one lung, and that he must relinquish the trade if he wishes to live any time, and that he, being a married man with a family, is unable to do so. At the shop where he works they are obliged to have gas on all day ; the ceiling is so low that an ordinary man is easily able to touch it with his hand where fifteen young men are employed. At the same shop two young men have left within the last three years and are since dead, and several have left in the same time through illness. My wife's sister has been in the trade, and symptoms of consumption have been brought on through the hours and standing, and she has now left and gone into a convalescent home. If the hours were reduced the morality and physique of the men would be much higher. The competition for places is very keen. There are thousands out of work always. It is of very little use for shop assistants to emigrate. As to the young women, I think that shorter hours and the introduction of seats in shops could be managed without any detriment to business arrangements. I lived once in a place where there were fifty young ladies, and they had seats behind the counter, and no detriment arose to the business. Unfortunately, many of the masters think because they have suffered themselves, their employés have to endure them also. As a rule they have half-an-hour for dinner, and twenty minutes for tea. Occasionally the time is abridged through lack of proper domestic arrangements. Generally speaking, the condition of affairs at meal times is such that no one but those with the strongest appetites can taste any food. This evil is especially trying for young women. The food is generally of the coarsest description, the butter, especially, being of so rank a description that poor breakfasts are always made. This refers to the majority of houses except in the West End. The dinners usually consist of the coarsest kinds of beef and mutton. The assistants dine in detachments. The second and third detachments invariably get their food in a cold or a semi-cold condition. Supper usually consists of bread and of so-called American cheese of strong flavour. For breakfast there is nothing but very weak tea and coffee, and bread and butter. Assistants are allowed in some houses to bring in some little delicacy, but this is by no means a general rule. In many houses the sleeping accommodation is very bad, though in some cases, it is fair to own, it is pretty good. I know of an instance in Oxford Street, W., of thirty young ladies who were engaged in the spring of last year, who were obliged to sleep four in a bed, in a room where there was no door, the room being on a level with the young men's sleeping apartment, also having no door. As a general rule, four or five assistants sleep in



one room. There are at least two or three beds in a room. It has to be admitted that the senior hands generally sleep alone, or with one other hand. The young ladies, as a rule, have means of washing themselves provided in their own rooms; but the young men have to make their toilets in a general lavatory. Many employers are strongly antagonistic to the Thursday 5 o'clock holiday. I think many would look upon any shortening of hours as an infringement of their rights. There are, on the other hand, not a few large-hearted men who would be pleased if anything like unanimity could be obtained in the matter of early closing. I am quite positive the same amount of business could be done in half the time during which shops are at present kept open. The public are to blame for late shopping, especially people who receive their wages on Friday and Saturday, and who themselves enjoy the boon of a weekly half-holiday. The afternoons and evenings are the busiest times of the day. The busiest time of all comes when signs are given of the closing of shops. Purchases could be made much earlier by the exercise of a little more prudence and forethought. The public could easily make their purchases by 7 P.M. At present they seem to put off their shopping till the very last moment, and even then many divide their attention between the shops and the public-houses. There would be no direct suffering if shops were closed at 7 every night, and at 9 on Saturdays. Were this reform brought about it would benefit both the public and the shop assistants. I have seen the voluntary closing system tried in many houses, but I am of opinion that it will never effectually remove the evil habit of late shopping. I consider the difficulties which surround trades unions in general would be insuperable in the case of shop-labour unions. If all shop assistants "turned out" to-day their places would almost immediately be filled up. I fear that petitions to Parliament would not do much good. I do not think the Thursday 5 o'clock closing will be permanent. I have noticed in one and the same house this strange anomaly, that milliners' "workwomen" come under the Acts, but milliners' "saleswomen" do not. I should say that in our house two-thirds of the assistants are under the age of 23, and half under 21. They come into business as apprentices from 13 to 16 years of age, and they have to stand during the same number of hours as adults. Female assistants commence business at 15 to 17 years of age. Three-fourths of them are under 21, as they get older they are sacrificed to make room for younger hands. Marriage is thus greatly discouraged. It is a hard matter for drapers' assistants who are married to get situations. Married men behind the counter lead a very uncomfortable life. If the hours of shop labour were reduced, it would, in my opinion, bring about a better state of things, for the young men and women would have an opportunity of living out of the house. I have no doubt that the sexes living together as they do,



leads, in many instances, to much immorality. As to apprentices, the only money they have is from home. If, however, they get into a department, they get a few premiums. The average salary of a man of 25 years of age is from £30 to £35 a year.

Richard G., an apprentice, drapery trade, Wood Street. Been there two and a half years. In the entering room we begin at 8.30 A.M., and often work till 1 and 2 o'clock the next morning in the busy season. The usual hours are about 7.30 or 8 A.M.; in the slack season we get off at 6 o'clock. We work till 12 on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and sometimes Fridays. I was fourteen when I begun. In my case I had no indentures; some apprentices have. I learn the wholesale drapery. The long hours are irregular. In February, March, and April, work is late; it is quieter in May, June, and July; it begins again in August and September; November and December are the worst months. There are only three months when there are short hours. The warehouses close at five during November, December, and January, and up to 1st February, and at six the rest of the year. When the warehouses are closed the entering boys are still kept at work. They are at work Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays till very late; they never leave before twelve during the busy time. We have "show" days, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, when circulars are sent out. No extra hands are put on, so there is a great pressure of work. During the demand for fancy goods at Christmas, I began Sunday night, and had no opportunity of going out till the following Saturday afternoon. As a rule we are not very busy on Mondays and Saturdays. During the greater part of the year we are occupied for the long hours. Only boys do the work. There are three desks, two boys are at each; there are men to assist in the heavy work. There is no extra pay for the extra work. The apprentices live on the premises. There are fifteen to twenty apprentices on the premises. All have to undergo these long hours for some two or three years. I have been fortunate—have only had eighteen months of it. The ages at which the boys enter the trade vary from fourteen to sixteen. There is general dissatisfaction at the time when they work late, and generally no effort has been made to improve the condition of things. It is thought one house could do nothing alone. There being no indentures, apprentices might have to leave if they complained. They don't complain to the authorities, only amongst themselves. I am not so healthy and strong as when I left home. I experienced lassitude in the morning. I know cases of boys who have been laid up. Recently a youth fainted at the desk from exhaustion during the day. That was during the busy time. We have no opportunity of taking exercise and air. When the gas is lit the effect of the air is very bad. The entering desks are in cellars. Ours is two floors below the ground. It is an exception to employ



men? At one time the work was all done by men. It saves expenses to make the apprentices do it. In our house about thirty people live in the house, about half of them apprentices. In many houses the food is not at all good. At first in our house the food was bad, and our health was affected in consequence. I gave three years for board and lodging. Afterwards I received £20 a year. We are not paid while working these long hours. The clerks at the entering desks do not look healthy. Their health and vigour are worn down. I know a case of an apprentice who was ill, and the firm paid the doctor's bill, but said they would not do so in future. Our work as a rule averages during the busy season eighty hours per week. We have no means of mental or physical recreation during the busy season. I should say the great remedy would be to employ more hands during the busy season. Our house will not go to the expense. The work could be got through much earlier if more hands were employed. The work might easily be done during the day. Meal times: breakfast, half-an-hour; dinner, half-an-hour; tea, half-an-hour. Sometimes there is crowding in the sleeping rooms. Some of the apprentices are too tired on a Sunday to attend church. I should be much better were it not for the overwork I have gone through. One remedy would be if the heads of houses could be appealed to personally. Perhaps some of them do not know the state of things existing. The men earn generally from about 15s. to 20s. per week, and their dinner and tea. Most of them are unmarried. There are no females in our warehouse.

Walter Albert R., age 27, enquiry clerk and collector, Kilburn. I have been at Cambrian Railways eight years, London and North-Western and Great Western Railways about four years. Have been in my present situation three years. When I entered the railway service the hours were 8 A.M. till 9 or 10 P.M., Saturdays included, until there was a change in the management, when my hours were 9 A.M. till 6 P.M., and 1 o'clock three Saturdays out of four. I now work 8.30 A.M. till 8 P.M., winter, and 9 P.M. Saturdays; summer, till 10.30 P.M. Saturdays, and about 9.45 P.M. other nights. Time for breakfast, thirty minutes; dinner, thirty minutes; tea, twenty minutes. I live on the premises. There are about sixty females and forty males, of whom about thirty are under twenty years of age, and about forty under the age of thirty. We have now no weekly half-holiday, but am allowed to leave business at 5 P.M. every Thursday, and most of the other assistants, but none of the apprentices. The shops closed at 5 P.M. on Thursdays for nine months. I have observed the sad effects of long hours. Immediately assistants break down they are sent away, and nothing more is heard of them. I was Hon. Sec. of the Kilburn, Brondisbury, and St John's Wood Committee for nine months, and worked hard, and it was almost entirely through a sad mistake on my



part that the Thursday five o'clock arrangement fell through in Kilburn; but I am thankful to say the Hampstead and St John's Wood tradesmen have stuck to it nearly two years, and as yet it shows no signs of falling through. The early closing movement aims at exactly the same object as the temperance movement—the health, happiness, and prosperity of the people; and, in my humble opinion, should be conducted in the same true Christian spirit, all meetings being opened and closed with prayer to God, without whose blessing all the greatest efforts will be in vain.

A shop assistant sends the following verses :—

#### A PLEA FOR THE SHOPMAN.

With faces so pallid and worn,  
And with weary and swollen feet,  
And with eyes that longingly turn  
Into the sunlit street.

With hearts that ache with longing  
To live like their fellow men,  
To go with the crowd a thronging,  
To fly from that heated den.

Ah, Heaven! will no one aid us?  
Will none in their pleasure pause?  
Alas, though many upbraid us,  
None will espouse our cause.  
And we gasp thro' the sultry summer,  
The air of the poisonous shop,  
And greet with a smile each comer,  
Tho' almost ready to drop.

Why the poorest drudge in the city  
Can fly from the noisome town,  
But the shopman gets no pity  
From either the "lord" or clown;  
And he yearns to leave the shop,  
To breathe in the pure cool air,  
On the heath or the green hill's top,  
Or the river so bright and fair.

And those that amass their wealth  
By the sweat of the shopman's brow,  
O what care they for *his* health,  
While they've gold from this human plough?  
O look at his careworn features.  
And think of his pleasures small,  
And then if you're human creatures,  
Down let the shutters fall.



## WHAT EMPLOYERS SAY.

Henry C., High Street, Deptford, milliner and draper, age 39. In business ten years. Causes : because the lower classes prefer shopping in the evening after day's work is over ; and competition in trade leads tradesmen to humour them in this respect to any extent. Same amount of business could certainly be done in much less time, say two hours per day less. I suffer much and frequently, principally from headaches. I have always given my assistants a weekly holiday in rotation ; three only employed, but several times one of them has had to give up for rest and change, I believe owing to long hours. The better class of tradesmen in some trades (say, outfitters, drapers, milliners), could be induced I think by persuasion ; but small trades, &c., those who most want reform, I think nothing short of legislation will be of any lasting effect ; this only applies where all agree ; if only one holds out or breaks, it immediately collapses, and has been the principal cause of failure. We have tried the five o'clock closing on Thursdays in Deptford now for twelve months, but it is only partial (drapery excepted) ; our committee is earnestly trying to extend it, but it is my opinion that the mid-week holiday nor any form of lessening the hours of labour will not be adopted by all trades except by Act of Parliament, compelling them to do so. I for one would gladly hail such a measure, and believe it to be a reform urgently needed.

Walter W., Waterloo Road, S.E., age 49, dyer and cleaner. The cause : competition in every branch of labour and commerce carried to excess. The consequence : rapid deterioration of the stamina of all commercial and labouring communities. Remedy : education in principles of social economy. In some trades additional hands would shorten the hours of labour (and the earnings) of those already employed ; in others, no increase of workers could diminish the actual time required for the various processes. Personally have not known ill-health, the waste of tissue may be from natural decay or from over-work. Want of thorough heartedness on the part of those who engaged to give it is the cause of the weekly holiday breaking down. That is the point in the whole matter ; late purchasers tempt the shopkeeper who would be glad to save his gas bill, his assistants' wages and his own strength, but competition forbids. The Factory Act as to hours of labour and meal hours could (with very slight emendations) be and should be applied to shop assistants. No persuasion can reach all of so diversified a class as employers of shop labour ; legislation is the only means, but in considering so many interests, is surrounded with so many difficulties as to appear hopeless.

James M., age 48, grocer and provision dealer. The cause



of many hours of labour is want of co-operation with the individual traders of the various branches of trade; the remedy is in co-operation. The business could be done in from one to two hours a day less. I often feel the injurious effects, and the man lives not to my age who has not felt it if he has been in a shop either as employer or employed. Of course it must be by persuasion, unless, indeed the Government passes a law to that effect, but they (the Government) have enough on their hands, and compulsion is objectionable. For two years I kept closing my shop at half-past one every Wednesday, in the hope I would get some of my brother traders to follow my example, finding they did not, I then closed every evening at 7 P.M., my neighbours not closing till eight and nine, but I soon found that for retail trade I must keep open as long as others, or submit to do very much less trade. My hours are now from 8 A.M. to 8 P.M., except Saturdays, and we have twenty minutes for dinner and also for tea; personally I should much like to curtail these hours, but I shall not again try unless my neighbours join, and then the sooner the better.

A. C. B., tea dealer and grocer, age 57, Bull Street, Birmingham. We have no unduly long hours of labour, our hours being from 9 A.M. to 7 P.M., with one hour for meals; many shops open *unnecessarily early*, and some close very late, we keep open till 8 on Friday, and some of the staff by turns till 10 on Saturday; our business could not be done in fewer hours, which you will see are only nine hours four days a week, and an average of ten hours on Friday and Saturday: hours that can harm no one. I have underlined unnecessarily early; many years ago used to have the assistants in soon after seven, found by concentrating business in fewer hours, better work was done. In many fancy businesses, assistants might just as well be at liberty till ten o'clock A.M., one quarter of them coming in alternately at an earlier hour to prepare for business.

J. S. O., age 50, general draper, Battersea Park Road, London, S.W. Causes—increasing competition, diminishing profits, increasing expenses in rents, rates, and taxes. No remedy but legislation, which, unless very wisely framed, will entail more hardship than that which it seeks to remove. Most certainly, if an Act was passed applying to all trades, the same amount of business might be done in two hours per day less. I have felt its injurious effects for some years past. Often great prostration after the late hours of Saturday. The holiday fell through because of loss of trade, which must accrue so soon as the movement ceases to be general in any trade. In working-class neighbourhoods the hours mentioned are too early. I think they might be closed on five days at 8 in winter, 9 in summer; Saturdays, 10 in winter, 11 in summer. My assistants complain of chiefly bodily prostra-



tion. I think it has been clearly demonstrated that persuasion will not do it. An Act of Parliament so framed as not to bear heavily upon any class of traders, but exempting none, will alone effect the desired object.

Charles Harrison V., Caledonian Road, Islington, N., age 27, trade general drapery. I believe the cause of such long hours is due to custom chiefly, but also to the great need of several struggling tradesmen to leave no stone unturned in their efforts to make a living, and thus try to gain an advantage over their more popular neighbour in the same trade by keeping open an hour longer. I also see many shops of all descriptions which are managed by wives, kept open till the husband comes home from his daily employment, be it as late as 11 o'clock, for him to close; and as the small tradesman affects the middle tradesmen and they the great tradesmen, it keeps the lot open in self-defence. In my trade the same business could be done from 8 to 6 as is now done from 8 to 9 during six months of the year; but from May to July and October to December inclusive it is as much as small and medium shopkeepers can do to get their shops daily dressed and customers served, &c., &c., during the long hours even we are now accustomed to keep, except where houses engage extra hands for the season and discharge them at the end thereof—a practice to be greatly condemned. In this Caledonian Road the holiday has not yet entirely broken down, but I have given my neighbours notice that this very week I shall discontinue closing at 5 on Thursday for these reasons:—Two neighbours of mine in same trade, who are so small as to be beneath the notice of the larger drapers in this road, have never closed with us at 5, and as I know they affect me I cannot ignore them any longer. Since we commenced in this road two and a quarter years ago to shut at 7 on Thursdays and since at 5 on Thursdays my takings have been smaller for the week. The trade on Wednesdays and Fridays has not been increased to make up for what Thursdays now are—blank days. Friends of mine in same trade who have closed at 5 once a week and now discontinued doing so, find their takings have been much more since they have broken through. Chiefly, my reason is that in a neighbourhood like this, when a woman has five shillings to spend, she wants a pair of boots for her child, or a fender, or this or that equally as much as a dress for herself, and if we, the drapers, are all closed, the money goes to the other trades. Servant girls usually get one day a month holiday, and when spending it at home, chiefly Wednesdays and Thursdays, it is their custom to get their mothers in the evening to go out shopping with them, and if they don't go out of the road to an immediate neighbouring market to do their drapery buying, they spend the money in other things. Shops in general, to the female public, are an exhibition in the neighbourhood of which they perambulate on their way



home or to a trifling errand, and whatever is then on view that takes the eye of a customer is very often purchased ; and if the shop is closed on Thursdays from 5 to 9, when two-thirds of the day's trade is usually done, it is depriving the trader of about one-ninth of his chances to sell from his windows, in which we put our trust. I allow thirty to forty minutes for each meal, and half-an-hour for young ladies to dress after dinner. Would certainly limit hours to twelve a day, even if I started at 10 to 10. But being a small tradesman, I lose one of my very few pulls over the larger tradesmen if I am bound by law to close the same time as he. At present, in a large house where the usual closing hour is 9, the shop-walker will see, and the assistants too, that the shop is closed at or about that time however busy they are, or else there is a disturbance. But in my shop, although 9 to 9.30 is the nominal closing time, we never think of shutting out customers when busy, even if we keep on till 10.30 or 11 ; and the few hands not only don't grumble, but are pleased when so busy. Of course, in such cases we make it extra comfortable for them in the house ; and in such a small house they are more as members of the family, and thus directly interested in doing all for the success of business, and in this way we get one of the very few pulls over our great neighbouring drapery establishments, and to abolish it would greatly interfere with our boasted English free trade. Give an inch take an ell is exemplified wonderfully in this case. Let assistants have from 8.30 to 11 every night to themselves and they want from 7 ; but where there is no time to do anything but have supper, a little read, and off to bed, I find hands are contented. The more pleasure, the more is wanted, *e.g.* barmaids, who have less time than any young people complain less. I certainly wish to have shorter hours of labour, but can see no way to achieve that end, but would offer the following suggestion : Let the committee divide a district into sections, as near as they can into separate markets, then divide the drapers, or all trades if possible, into four companies, and let each company close one whole day a month alternately, and as each shop would close then but twelve times a year, excluding bank holidays, the proprietor could then afford to send circulars or post large bills advertising the date of next "Labour League Holiday." The public then need never shop away from home ; and the present half-holiday system, which is often spent by assistants at theatres would not unsettle hands so frequently as is the present case. Of course, great care and combined consultation would have to be taken in carrying out the above, but it or something similar seems practicable.

H. J. B., Exmouth Street, W.C., ironmonger, age 45. The causes are many, and may vary in different districts. From sheer bad habit, many persons will not shop till the last moment. The artizan class are not free to shop till late ; the better regulation of



public houses might have an influence with many. I regret to say the last hour of the day is sometimes the most profitable, although the same and more business could be done in less time. I am often much worn out. Nothing untoward has developed itself with us. Perhaps we are better ventilated than many. I have little faith in persuasion.—I should like an earlier closing time if possible. In any endeavour to make a change by law I do feel some care should be taken not to trample on the liberty of the subject, as there are so many things in practice which necessitate long hours. If I shut up my shop at an early hour I should be ruined by so doing until all fell into such a practice.

Messrs M. & M., grocers, High Street, Peckham; Goswell Road; Broadway, London Fds.; Peckham, Rye; Peckham Park Road. The only remedy for long hours is legislation. The business could be easily done in the first four days of the week from 8 A.M. to 8 P.M., Friday 8 A.M. to 9 P.M., Saturday 8 A.M. to 10 P.M.

George W., Lambeth Walk, clothier and outfitter. Business could be done in three or four hours less per day easily. I am sure not by persuasion, only by legislation—an extension of the Factory Act. My opinion, if the shops closed earlier and abolished Sunday trading, it would be more beneficial to the public and tradesmen generally. I think if shops could be compelled to close at an earlier time it would be a great advantage to hundreds of poor families, and less to the publican. I should be very glad to see public-houses included in one of the clauses of the Act. The hours of labour in certain shops, Sundays included, are a disgrace to civilization.

A. R. W., Caledonian Road, age 33, grocer and cheesemonger. Causes: competition being so keen, profits small, expenses high, in the shape of rent, rates, and taxes, it makes us anxious to take all we can, and no unity in the trade. I think things will not be better until we get legislation to compel all to close sooner. I believe we could do the same amount of business in two hours less per day. I believe we could do our business if all were to combine in time as follows—first, four days from 8 A.M. to 8 P.M.; fifth day, 8 A.M. to 9 P.M.; and sixth day, 8 A.M. to 10 P.M. We always give our assistants half-hour to each meal, and an extra half-hour for washing and dressing after tea, and the hours they work are from 8 A.M. to 10 P.M., each having a leaving off every Monday, taking it in turns, but if we could get our neighbours to join with us, I should be pleased to close the shop at 5 P.M. on Thursday, and to limit their hours to twelve a day. I do not think it possible to shorten the hours of labour by persuasion, only by legislation. I should very much like a general earlier closing.

Matthew L., oil and Italian warehouseman, Exmouth Street,



W.C.; Aldgate, City; Cable Street, Backchurch Lane, Cannon Street Road, Lever Street, and New Road. Causes: competition in the first place, and heavy taxation and rents, making expenses at times difficult to meet. The remedy must be legislation. Business could certainly be done in much less time if all are compelled to close. I should say from 8 A.M. to 8 P.M.; and 10 P.M. on Saturdays. Many times I am fairly done up. Nothing except legislation will be of any permanent use. I am quite agreeable to the hours suggested. As I have before stated, I believe if the Thursday half-holiday is introduced into the bill, it will be the means of creating contention about what otherwise is only reasonable in the matter. Employers will have to increase their staff to get through the work. It is also a well-known fact that it unfits assistants for business; and if you ask how they have spent the time, nine out of ten will tell you, in the Music Hall or Theatre; and further, it is shutting out a half day's business, which you well know we can ill afford. These points are worth your attention. And do not forget public houses; while they keep open, you well know many of the British workmen, aye, and working women, will stick in them.

C. D., age 40, Battersea Park Road, S.W. Causes: 1st, competition; 2nd, want of unity among tradesmen as to the hours of closing. The consequences are great loss through burning gas, and waste of energy. I would suggest legislation. From observation, I am quite assured that the same business could be done in two or three hours per day less. I have suffered very much in the past from working overtime, and am certain there is no ultimate gain, either to master or man, from working unduly long hours. I allow my apprentices half-an-hour to breakfast and tea, and one hour for dinner, out of the twelve hours, and allow them to leave work at 4 P.M. on Saturdays. It is my opinion, after several years of work in the cause, that shorter hours will never be obtained in retail businesses by persuasion.

J. F. G., Lambeth Lower Marsh, S.E., tea-dealer and grocer. Causes: severer competition, and jealousy between rivals in the same neighbourhood. Shops, as a rule, are more attractive by gas-light. Mechanics are generally paid in the afternoon, and their wives receive their money for purchases later still, especially if husbands intemperate, their shopping being delayed until the latest time. Suggested a compulsory remedy for the worst cases, and a different pay day to Saturday. I always feel the effects when I stay late. The shopping could easily be done within the time named, but in our trade the preparatory work could not be finished (weighing up, &c.). Consider best hours for closing, 8 P.M. and 10 or 11 on Saturdays (earlier in some neighbourhoods). At exceptionally busy periods my assistants all suffer. Our own



hours are not so long as some others—as, in fact, the majority. Would agree to close earlier if custom universally general. Do not think earlier closing will be accomplished by persuasion. I do not consider that a hard and fast rule for closing at the same time could be universally applied everywhere. The conditions vary in different neighbourhoods. The same hour for closing might be early for the West End, and late for here or in the East End. You ought to be successful in obtaining legislation to come into effect for the worst cases. If mechanics were paid on Friday night they would, in most cases, hand over the weekly allowance to their wives the same night. This would then be available for the next morning, and many could make their purchases before dinner. This would prevent the very late shopping on Saturdays to some extent.

John P., draper, Hope Street, Wrexham, age 42. I regard long hours of shop labour as mainly the result of habit and competition in trade, and, as the result of my observations, certainly injurious, morally and physically, to assistants. Business could, in my opinion, be done in much less time, and without inconvenience to the public or loss to employers. Twelve hours of open shop is the utmost limit I think necessary for any trade. In 1858, when employed in London, my health was very injuriously affected by long hours, and irregular and insufficient time for meals. In this town, Wrexham, the half-holiday was in operation for two years, 1880-1881, and worked well. It was broken through by the action of a new shopkeeper in refusing to adopt the system, and I think this is the usual cause of its breaking down. We could close without inconvenience at 7 o'clock, and 10 o'clock on Saturdays. I am not aware of any instance of illness through long hours in my shop, as we have always closed at 7.30 and 6 o'clock on Fridays. Having been engaged in trade for a period of twenty-eight years, I can bear testimony to a very considerable curtailment in shop hours, and a general improvement in the condition of assistants. I mean more particularly as regards diet, the introduction of libraries, the encouragement of athletic games, and altogether a greater regard by employers for the comfort and general well-being of their assistants. My experience refers more particularly to large London houses and kindred establishments in our leading provincial towns. But I have every reason to believe that, as regards the East End of London and suburbs, and also vast numbers of small shops in our manufacturing districts, the condition of assistants as regards long hours is very unsatisfactory, and I believe that an Act of Parliament on the lines indicated would be workable, and I am satisfied would add to the comfort and prolong the lives of thousands of a useful and uncomplaining class, and this great result could be attained without loss to anyone.



Harry James F., age 33, Westminster Bridge Road, bootmaker and factor. In many trades there is no definite time for closing, hence the bad habit of one waiting for the other to close. The public, more especially the working classes, by leaving their purchases to the last moment, encourage late shopping. In my opinion the Legislature would be justified in passing a bill regulating the hours of labour, especially if desired by a majority of the leading community, with whom, I believe, the measure would be very popular. My hours are—five days, 8 A.M. to 8 P.M.; sixth day, 8 A.M. to 10 P.M. My health is permanently impaired through above-mentioned means. My assistants have suffered considerably from the long hours and constant standing. The remedy is by legislation. It is scarcely necessary to add that the assistants, many of whom are Parliamentary voters, are in favour of less hours. The appeal made by ministers of all denominations has had beneficial effect. If the leaders and representatives of trade and benefit societies would exert themselves in a similar manner, the movement would be greatly advanced.

Andrew D., Southwark. The cause — undue competition. Effects—ignorance and wasteful toil. Remedy—legal restriction of business hours. No shop should be open later than 7 o'clock, and if this were law for some years then six o'clock would suffice. I have suffered from long hours, but cannot specify. The Thursday half-holiday is unnatural. Does not accord with the fitness of things. The Saturday half-holiday, where it is practicable, is more natural. We—Price, Dunn, & Co.—close at 7 every day, and on Saturday at 2. The assistants here get an hour for dinner and half-an-hour for tea. They breakfast before they come. We open at 8 all round the year. It is possible only by law, and an Act of Parliament should be passed on same principle as the Factory Acts.

E. C. G. and H. S. G., High Street, Peckham, corn merchants and grocers, ages 33 and 29. Tradesmen keeping their shops open late, which induces the public to make their purchases late in the evening. The only remedy to close early is by compulsion. We believe the same amount of work could be done in our establishment in twelve to fourteen hours less per week than at the present time. We feel no ill effects, but much fatigue, especially on Saturdays. If the public would shop early, we believe all our business could be done so as to enable us to close at the following hours — Wednesday, 5 o'clock; Monday, Tuesday and Thursday, 8; Friday, 9; and Saturday, 10. We wish to have an earlier closing, but consider the only way to do so is to get an Act passed to make it compulsory that everyone should close at stated times.

J. A., Westminster Bridge Road, draper. Cause of long hours is keen competition. Remedy, compulsory legislation. In this



district the same amount of business could be done from 8 A.M. to 8 P.M., including Saturdays. No doubt about it that my assistants have been deteriorated in mind and body from the long hours. I wish for earlier closing, and think it can only be done by Act of Parliament.

Joseph B., Caledonian Road, N., age 32, draper. It is a difficult thing to give an opinion on this matter. I can only say this, and feel sure, that nothing but an Act of Parliament can alter our late hours, and the sooner this is done the better for employers and employés. Business could be done easily from 8 A.M. till 8 P.M., Saturdays 8 A.M. till 10 P.M. I suffer from occasional languid feelings and weakness through over pressure, and more especially late hours. If we closed our shops earlier purchasers would have to shop earlier, and it could be done if we all closed at 8 P.M., Saturdays 10 P.M. No doubt my assistants suffer as I do myself, through over pressure and late hours. I allow my assistants half-an-hour for each meal. We close at five o'clock every Thursday, and should like to give them earlier hours all the week through. Persuasion will not do it, nothing but an Act of Parliament can do it, and earlier closing we want.

Richard M., oilman, Pitfield Street, Hoxton, N. (been in possession of above address twenty-five years). Cause: want of unity amongst tradesmen. An Act of Parliament that will limit the hours of labour similar to the Factory Acts is the only remedy. I think that the same amount of business could be accomplished in less time, say from 8 A.M. to 8 P.M. the first five days of the week, and from 8 A.M. to 10 P.M. on Saturdays; present hours, 8 A.M. to 10 P.M. first five days, and 8 A.M. to 12 P.M. on Saturdays (in this neighbourhood). I get weary and tired every day from the long hours, and my constitution is weakened. The public will never shop early unless shops are compelled to close. My assistants have an hour for dinner, and half-an-hour for tea, but should oppose a half-holiday once a week. My assistants commence work after breakfast, viz., 8 o'clock. Remedy is by legislation, having tried persuasion myself many times, and failing in every instance.

William H., draper, Union Road, Rotherhithe, S.E. I think legislation is the only remedy. Certainly the business could be done in eight or ten hours per week less. I have not suffered particularly bodily. I find my eyesight getting rather weak, consequent upon being in the gas many hours. I should suggest twelve hours, 8 A.M. to 8 P.M. each day, except Saturday at 9 P.M., but would willingly fall in with 7 o'clock closing if general. Undoubtedly my assistants have suffered, many of them especially in the summer time. Persuasion will never shorten the hours; legis-



lation is the only thing that will do it. I do heartily wish to close earlier.

George F. S., draper, age 25, junior partner G. S. & Co., Shore-ditch. The principal reason why hours are so long is because the majority of customers in the East of London are in business themselves during the day, and can only shop at night. We could not do our business in less time. We calculate we lose £50 per week through closing at 5 P.M. on Thursdays. Being a young man, have not at present felt any evil effects beyond general lassitude towards end of week. Want of co-operation. Certainly, if purchasers would come early we could and would close earlier, but they won't. We mostly select young people from the country. The remedy is only by legislation. We certainly should like shorter hours. Personally I am strongly in favour of early closing, and I think I cannot show better proof than by not only advocating the movement, but actually closing every Thursday night whilst our immediate neighbours do not. I am afraid that unless the movement becomes more general we shall have to re-open on Thursday nights, as we cannot afford to lose trade. At the same time I sincerely hope not, and wish the early closing movement every success.

F. H., draper, age 32. The cause is the jealous feeling that exists in consequence of the competition in different classes of trade, and suggest that employers should be more unanimous in their endeavours to benefit their employés and themselves. The labour could be lessened by a few hours per week, and in some cases by ten or twelve hours per week. I have suffered from the long hours. Cause of no half-holiday is the selfish feeling that exists in the minds of employers. I have been a supporter of early closing for a number of years, and fortunately at the present time have been favoured with success, as I will shew below. Some eighteen months ago a neighbour of mine suggested closing early on Thursdays, and falling in with his views we set the example and did so. Within a month it was the means of persuading the rest of our neighbours to do the same, and at the present time we do so, although in some trades it has fallen through. I am convinced that it has not affected my trade in any depreciative way; in fact, on the contrary, I believe my customers are only too glad to assist me in giving an extra hour or two for my young people's enjoyment. On several occasions within the last ten years I with others have tried to close at eight instead of nine every night (Saturdays excepted), but have always failed for this reason: Mr A. has by some means been unable to close until ten minutes past, Mr B. the next night probably being ten minutes later still, and so on until Mr A. waits for Mr B., and Mr B. waits for Mr C., and so on until it entirely broke through within a fortnight on each occasion we have tried it.



H. H., Rye Lane, Peckham, S.E., age 30, draper. The great cause of late shopping is, that the poorer classes do not find it convenient to shop until their husbands have returned, and their domestic duties finished for the day. In the summer many shop late, as the cool of the evening is more pleasant. The only remedy is legislation. As a rule, the closing has been confined to one or two trades ; if all closed there would not be the danger of its falling through. In my class of business, we could not close earlier than 7 P.M. I should suggest 7 P.M. in winter ; 8 P.M. in summer ; 10 P.M. on Saturdays. If it were the custom for all to close, I should be only too glad to do the same ; and I think a Bill for twelve hours would command more support than one for a less time. I feel convinced that legislation is the only means to shorten long hours. I think this idea of getting the opinion of employers very good. I am sure we all desire an earlier closing, but I should not give it my support if we are to be subjected to vexatious prosecution in the event of our being through an accident not quite punctual. I should not like to feel that we are being watched to the minute, as is now the case with licensed victuallers. Any one habitually breaking the law should certainly be summoned.

E. S. G., High Street, Peckham, age 50, cheesemonger. Cause, want of union ; remedy, compulsion by Act of Parliament. I believe the same business could be done in two hours less. I get dreadfully tired and worn-out. It does not seem like business to be closed so early in the day. It was tried in Peckham several years back, and proved a complete failure. We could close very well at 8 P.M. on the first four days of the week, and 9 P.M. on Fridays, 11 P.M. on Saturdays. I should object to the half-holiday. I believe it is possible to shorten the hours of labour by Act of Parliament only. I certainly do wish for earlier closing.

John Joseph W., Lower Gardiner Street, Dublin, Secretary of to the Grocers' Assistants' Association, commercial traveller and cork manufacturer. The cause of long hours, in my opinion, is the want of proper system on the part of the employers. The remedy I would suggest would be a union of the different trade employers, and a union of the assistants. Certainly the business could be well done in nearly half the time with proper system, and when the public would be initiated in the working of the plan adopted. I have not suffered personally, but I see around me fine young fellows falling into decline, and leaving here after a few years to go home to the country, perhaps to be recruited, perhaps to be buried. There are exceptionally few assistants (grocers) here who get a half day. In my opinion if the public would only slightly consider the assistants the licensed houses could easily be closed at 10 P.M. I believe many of my assistants have suffered



from the long hours. All shops, drapers, butchers, publicans, &c., &c., in my opinion, should close at least at 10 P.M. on Saturday nights; on ordinary week nights I think they should close at 8 P.M., the publicans at 10 P.M., and the pawnbrokers at 7 P.M. Grocers' assistants here work on an average, sixteen hours per week-day.

E. & J., Rye Lane, Peckham, fancy drapers. The cause of long hours is undoubtedly the want of co-operation, the competition now being so keen, that one tradesman will not close until he sees one of his neighbours close. The business could be done in about two hours per day less. In our opinion it would be better to have a half-holiday once a week, and when that is well taken up, then try and shorten the other days by an hour or two.

J. W., Caledonian Road, corn and seed merchant. Cause: absence of unity among employers, by which late shopping is really encouraged. One remedy would be the formation of a society among assistants similar to the Mechanics' Unions. The above trade could not be done in less than at present (9 P.M.), cabmen and others having to earn money before they can purchase fodder—11 instead of 12 P.M. on Saturdays certainly. Jealousy among tradesmen of side street shopkeepers causes all holidays to break down. To obtain an Act for the purpose of compelling shopkeepers to close their shops at any stated hour is improbable, but a measure might be carried to restrain them from employing servants in their business beyond a certain number of hours per day or week.

Eleanor & Lizzie W., fancy drapers, Kentish Town Road, N.W. Causes: that rent and taxes are so heavy, competition so great, profits so small, that we cannot afford to lose one customer. We deeply deplore the long hours, they are bad in every way; injurious to health, leaving no time for improvement of any kind or recreation. Do not like the weekly half-holiday, but advocate shorter hours every day: say from eight in the morning to seven, and ten on Saturday. Our assistants have half-an-hour or more for each meal; and one evening from five, once a week.

Thomas H., Cloth Market, Newcastle-on-Tyne, age 51, grocer and tea-dealer. Causes: with many tradesmen an unreasonable greed of gain (beyond liberal requirements), fostered by extravagant living; but with (probably) most, the difficulty of making ends meet without opening the net to all that can be caught. This is caused by the excessive competition which has much increased of late, largely due to the co-operative stores, civil service, and others. I can only answer for my own business; we have increased both extent of business and of net profits since we began to close earlier. I have enjoyed good health, but have no doubt that more frequent



exercise in the country air would promote physical vigour. During my apprenticeship, my hours were eight or ten hours per week longer than I have adopted in my own business, but we used to take exercise before 7 A.M., and after 8 P.M., for health and enjoyment. The cause of the half-holiday failing is want of unanimity amongst employers, and the impossibility, I fear, of obtaining a uniform practice where the circumstances and requirements of different trades and grades of business vary so much as they do. This applies more to drapers than to grocers. The former have but little to do, I suppose, when not occupied with customers. Grocers have constant work, which, in my case, occupies the staff from Monday morning till Friday night, in preparation for the Saturday's market, and the business of the coming week. I do close at six on four nights, eight on Friday, and ten on Saturday. My assistants have suffered. My foreman, who had served me well for eleven years, relinquished his situation on the score of the long continued standing behind the counter, but he was not a young man. Without waiting for the custom to become general, I allow my assistants an hour for dinner (out of the house), about half-an-hour for tea on the premises. We open at 8 A.M. and close at 6 P.M. on four days, and work from 8 A.M. to 8 P.M. on Fridays, and 8 A.M. to 10 P.M. on Saturdays (less meals), making sixty-six hours per week, less seven hours for meals, equal fifty-nine hours net; subject to overtime at busy seasons, which is acknowledged by an (*ad valorem*) Christmas gratuity according to respective wages. I think it is scarcely practicable to obtain uniformity amongst all classes of employers. It would be more probable if each section of tradesmen were to act uniformly amongst their own fraternity, but this will be almost impossible to obtain, I fear. Earlier closing or an occasional afternoon holiday would be very desirable, and I should like to see it, if practicable without loss. My assistants have each two weeks holidays between April and October. I believe that if the Christian churches would acknowledge and act upon the belief that this life is given us for enjoyment, in a lofty sense, as a preparation for the life to come; that this is to be attained by the study of nature, by healthful exercise, by intellectual culture, &c., to a much greater extent than at present prevails, and not by grinding toil of both employers and employed, to the practical exclusion of these aims, or of the adoption of the means to this end, we should see a great change in respect to the hours of labour. People of large means would be willing to pay a reasonable price for their required commodities, instead of combining to secure the tradesmen's profit to themselves, and a higher sense of commercial morality would prevail. Purchasers would not take such inconsiderately long credit, and tradesmen would be at liberty to sell at more reasonable rates of profit. But so long as money-getting and extravagant selfish indulgence are the almost sole objects of the lives of so large a pro-



portion of the community, we can scarcely hope to see much ease secured for struggling tradesmen or over-worked employés. I have largely increased my own happiness in life by devoting some portion of my time to various endeavours for the welfare of my fellow-men. I regard it as a pleasurable duty, and not as anything of which to speak boastfully at all.

James H., stationer and postmaster, age 46, Westminster Bridge Road, Lower Marsh. My opinion is the public do not care anything about the subject. If a shop is open they make their purchases; if it is closed they cannot, so the whole matter rests with the shopkeeper. I could do the whole of my business in two or three hours if the people would only come. I should like a little more rest.

George W. B., cheesemonger, 20 Little Earl Street. The causes are the working-men or mechanics delaying their purchases to a late hour, or on Saturday driving it to Sunday morning. I would suggest, first of all, no trading on Sunday. Next, that we should be able to close at 8 or half-past 8. Of course the business could be done in much less time. I may say that there is no time for improvement or relaxation of work of any kind at the present long hours. I should adopt earlier closing at once if I could, and the others would. I have been an advocate for early closing for many years, and have tried to get others to do the same, as my support of the League would show, also by trying by bills and persuasion fifteen years ago.

Trewby B., Coburg House, Waterloo Road, S.E., linen drapers. The cause in our locality is that the wives of the labouring men who principally live about here are unable to go out shopping until the children are put to bed or the husband has returned home; and the draper is generally the last tradesman dealt with, as all necessaries, that is food, &c., must be bought first. The whole trade could be done in two-thirds of the time now appropriated. I have not suffered in my present shop, which has a free passage of air through it all the year round; but in early days, spent in a shop kept closed up, the heated air and confinement caused intense weariness and debility. The cause in our neighbourhood of the half-holiday breaking down was that the people shopped in other localities, and so we lost that evening's trade and probably more, as a customer who once leaves a shop is inclined to stray away again. Owing to the failure of judgment we have shown (we having been obliged to open our shop on the holiday evening after having joined the movement), in agreeing to close at 5 o'clock one day a week, we should decline to promise any alteration of our present system, which allows about half-an-hour for meals, limits the hours to thirteen in winter, thirteen and a half in summer, and gives a day's holiday once in three weeks. We



do not think any settled system would apply to all trades, each one must be governed by the exigencies of its position. For ourselves we should gladly welcome an earlier closing of shops.

Charles William M., Francis Street, Battersea, age 30, grocer and cheesemonger. Causes : customers leaving their shopping until the last few hours of the shops being open, and want of unity of action amongst shopkeepers. Consequences : prostration of health in numerous forms, weakness of the nerves of the eyes caused by the number of hours of gaslight, and pains and swelling of veins of the legs from long standing. Remedy : to obtain by universal action general closing at 6 or 8 P.M. if possible, or by other means if unity of action has failed. Time necessary : I feel confident that the business done now in fourteen and sixteen hours could be done in ten or twelve hours. Ill effects : I have in addition to the effects mentioned above suffered from great debility. I think persuasion is not sufficient to obtain the object. I think to try to pass a Bill in Parliament will be the only way to give effect to the object we have in view, and the League to see to its being enforced after it is passed. I should be very pleased to see the object you have in view become general. I think this is a noble movement, and if carried into effect it will not only prove a boon to shopkeepers and their assistants, but it will be the means of shortening the hours of labour of thousands that this movement does not directly appeal for, namely carmen, travellers, and others, who, by the fact of shops being closed earlier, will necessitate them delivering and soliciting earlier, and thereby reduce their hours of labour likewise.

R. Corbett J., Worcester Street, Birmingham, age 38, family grocer and biscuit merchant. The cause in a great measure due to habits of working-classes, who have accustomed themselves to shop late. The consequences : increased expenses, waste of labour, limited domestic happiness, often life shortened. It certainly is unnecessary. No retail trade should require, as a rule, more than eleven hours' labour from its hands per day first five days of week, including time for meals. Have tried it for eight years, would not change for longer hours. Have not personally felt any bodily ill-effects from the long hours. When young lost many opportunities of self-improvement through the longer hours. I was then engaged in my business. I have known a bright healthy youth permanently injured by long hours. Often produces phthisis. The remedy is by persuasion, unity of action of the assistants, sacrifice of some time and money on their part, persistently keeping the movement to front, then seize moment when it is ripe, or the old phrase, "iron hot," and then press for united action on employers' part. Believing in the movement by adopting it, I can only add it has my heartiest sympathy as it had ten years ago ; and though



my nearest neighbours changed their minds and broke their pledge to close first four nights at 7,—I now close first five nights at 7,—out of five who did so in my own trade four have found their way since into the bankruptcy court, proving in a measure that long hours in retail trades is not essential to success.

W. G. G., Bull Street, Birmingham, age 37, hosier. The majority of hosiers in Birmingham desire to have shorter hours, but a few grasping men (generally those who can do little when others are open) will not close. A vigorous and influential Early Closing Society might help a little, but I fear there is no effectual remedy. The business might be done in less time with additional staff in my case, not else. I have certainly suffered. The long hours where and when gas is in use injures health, and has done mine. The electric light will, I hope, soon help us in this matter. The half-holiday never existed here, so far as I know. My assistants have three-quarters of an hour for dinner, half-an-hour for tea. Should like to close at 7 all the year round. It should be remembered that a great many families have no servants, and consequently it is most convenient for the shopping to be done after the house duties are finished, and some of the younger members are gone to bed. Also many do not leave their works or offices, &c., till 6 o'clock, or later, and so it is they must do their shopping in the evening. Under these circumstances I think 7 o'clock the very earliest it would be practical to close.

J. R., draper, forty-four years in business as an employer, and ten as an apprentice and assistant. Cause: public convenience, excessive competition, high rents, rates and taxes, the pressure of which is increased by co-operative, civil service, and other stores, and market halls. The first step towards earlier closing should be begun by corporate bodies closing their market halls earlier, especially on Saturdays. All business might be closed with advantage at 7 P.M. every night, if it were not for market halls and Government interference with workrooms. There is no need whatever for Saturday being later than other nights. Customers must be attended to when they come. My hours never exceed twelve a day except Saturdays, and if it were universal, open markets as well as shops, public-houses as well as others, I should gladly close every Saturday at 5, but not any other day. It can be done by legislative enactment only, and that must take in all, and treat all with equal fairness. I do not think that the hours generally are excessive—no doubt some are—but still shorter ones I could desire.

E. W. E., general draper, Battersea Park Road, age 47. Cause: competition, small profits, grinding taxation, rates, &c. Legislation is the only remedy, all other means having failed. It must be wisely framed, else the remedy will be worse than the existing evil.



There is no doubt but what the same amount of business might be done in two hours per day less. I have suffered severely. Some years ago I was obliged to leave a good situation on account of the heat of the gas and confinement, which produced an illness, from the effects of which I suffer to this day. Loss of trade in many instances, and the movement not being general enough, has caused the weekly half-holiday to break down. In low class neighbourhoods, 6 and 7 during the week and 9 on Saturdays is too early. They might close on five days, 8 in winter and 9 in summer, 10 on Saturdays. My assistants suffer chiefly from bodily prostration. Although we have no stated time for meals, they invariably take half-an-hour, and are very rarely disturbed; and am also in favour of the weekly 5 o'clock closing, which we still enjoy. I am convinced, after thirty-four years' experience in the drapery trade, that nothing short of an Act of Parliament will or can alter our present condition. I should like much earlier closing if general throughout the various trades.

William N., Broad Street, Pendleton, grocer since 1842, age 63, and in good health now, and I hope to keep so for some time yet. I am not tired of my trade. I do not think the hours are over long now in a good regulated shop and business, and is very much their own fault. Attention to business while at it, and it will cause you to close at a reasonable time. More work could be done in less time, but if the customers don't come, how can you help it? You must wait till they do, or be without. I have felt no ill effects, and work in our trade now will never hurt any one. It is for want of it. Our time is from 8 to 8, and more than one hour out of that for meals. Persons with small means cannot afford to go outing week days and Sundays also. More play more money. I am not a slave-driver, but I can tell where the shoe pinches. You cannot make people come only to suit themselves. We are in a free country. No law that you can make will meet this case, only by force of habit. My assistants have not suffered. I have had them five, seven, and ten years, and seven that have left me are all in business on their own account. An Englishman's home is his castle. My regulations at present are better than any you can suggest, bar the 5 o'clock closing. I think you will do no good only by persuasion and demand. A young man will always command a reasonable place if he has tact about him.

James H., Kentish Town Road, butcher. Customers knowing that the shops do not close early come as late as they can. We want one and all to close at a certain time. Business could be done in two hours less every day. Saturday must be a later night. My assistants have suffered at times.

Henry W. L., Hackney Road, draper. I believe late shopping to be simply habit, and am of opinion there is no remedy but



legislation, it being impossible to get unity amongst drapers. Certainly I should venture to say the same amount of trade could easily be done between the hours of 8 A.M. and 8 P.M., or even less. I have suffered from long hours for many years. Am not in a position to speak as to half-holiday failing, it not having been broken by me. I commenced three years since, and have continued (the first in the East of London). Without the slightest doubt we could close at six or seven, and nine or ten on Saturdays if purchasers would come early instead of late. I think my assistants have not suffered much, as I generally try to make up for long standing by giving them time if necessary. I do not think it necessary to take half-an-hour for tea and breakfast, and they already have half-an-hour for dinner. As regards the twelve hours a day, I think it quite sufficient time, and should be glad even if it were less. The closing at five o'clock on Thursdays I hope to continue as long as in business; it is a wonderful boon both to employed and employers. There is no doubt about its being possible to shorten the hours of shop labour. There being no unity amongst drapers, I can see no other way but legislation. My opinion is you want to get at the public, plenty of handbills asking them to shop earlier, but am afraid it is no good to rely upon drapers' assistants, as they lack energy, especially the male portion. It would be a grand thing to get all houses to close at two o'clock on Thursdays and do away with Saturdays. One thing is quite certain, in many instances we are obliged to keep open to serve the people who will not work after two o'clock on Saturdays themselves.

William P., provision merchant, grocer, wine and spirit merchant, age 54. Our hours are not long, but if the Stores (Army, Navy, and Civil Service) were abolished, perhaps an hour each day could be shortened, from the competition being less severe. Our hours are eight to eight, eight to nine Thursday, eight to ten Fridays, eleven Saturdays. I have not suffered from long hours. I am 54 years old. I used to work in London and here fifteen to seventeen hours per day, and am very healthy now. I would not commence the half-holiday. I found my neighbour assistants hurried over their work and neglected some for the half-holiday, and were unready for business next morning. I never knew a case of illness. I have about fifty hands altogether. I should certainly object to close earlier. My young men have three-quarters of an hour for dinner, half-an-hour for tea, and an evening occasionally when required, and as a rule I find great inconvenience from some of the assistants being absent. I am of opinion that half-an-hour may be given all round. I should strongly oppose legislation on the subject.

Herbert B., Kentish Town Road, N.W., draper, age 34. Want



of thought on the part of the public, and want of courage on the part of shopkeepers is the cause. Business could be done in much less time. Ten hours a day would give ample time, commencing at eight until seven, allowing two hours for meals. The small traders who employ no, or very few, assistants are the first to break through the half-holiday. Our hours are from eight to eight winter, eight to nine summer. We close at 5 o'clock on Thursdays. I should be very willing to do anything for the mental and moral and general good of my assistants. I should like a general earlier closing, and should like to see shop labour done in less time. Am not decided as to which is the best way to get hours shortened. Have worked hard myself in this district with a view to it. I think if we had shorter hours we should get our work better done; our assistants would be able to attend classes and religious meetings, and thus be improved. I think there is no more urgent and pressing question of the day, and none which calls more for the help and action of philanthropic men than this of shortening hours of labour in shops.

Joshua A., draper, age 45. Severe competition is the cause. The only remedy I can suggest is for there to be less in the trade, but cannot suggest how that can be effected. Business could be done in considerably less time. Cannot say that I have suffered, but should be glad to have shorter hours so that I might have time for instruction and recreation. Want of principle and good faith amongst one's neighbours ruins the half-holiday. My assistants have not suffered if they have come into the trade strong and healthy, but decidedly so in the case of those with delicate constitutions. Should be only too glad to close earlier if others would do so. Decidedly not by persuasion can the hours be shortened. In my idea an Act of Parliament is the only remedy. I do not see, however, that an Act of Parliament for females only would answer. It would throw the drapery trade into men's hands wholly, and I think there is even now a tendency in that direction on account of the frequent changes with females, consequent on marriage, going home to nurse parents, &c.

Samuel B., of B. and Son, Southport. Having been in business for upwards of fifty years, I am not now actively engaged therein, but the firm, which consists of myself and others under the title of B. and Co., drapers, milliners, cabinet makers, &c., &c., have always been accustomed to study the interest of the employés. Business is commenced at 8.30 A.M., so far as apprentices are concerned, the assistants not being at work until 9 A.M.. The hours of closing are 7 P.M. on five days, and 5 P.M. Saturdays. A fortnight (or rather sixteen days) is given for an annual holiday, with all Bank holidays, Christmas days, and Good Fridays, salaries being paid in full. The ladies behind the counter are provided



with seat accommodation, which they use when not otherwise employed. Every care is paid to their comfort and health, so that no change is required as far as the firm's arrangements are concerned. No doubt in lower and pushing trades, something ought to be done to lessen the hours of business, but as competition is so strong, I fear nothing but legislation will materially benefit the employés in this class, although the same amount of business might be done in much shorter hours. I do not think the half-holiday would succeed, unless it were done by legislative action, as the jealousy of tradesmen would make any other arrangement inoperative. On these grounds, I fear the early closing movement can never be universally carried out by persuasion. I may say that in my early days I was accustomed to work from 7 and 7.30 A.M. to 9 or 10 P.M., and on Saturdays to midnight, and I do not know that it was prejudicial to my health, nevertheless competition is now much greater, and no doubt this affects the whole retail trade, although all the business of the retailers might be accomplished in much shorter hours.

Henry R., hosier, 2 St Peter Street, Derby. Cause : want of interest on the part of employers, in the welfare, physical, mental, and moral, of their employés. Indifference of assistants, to the importance of combination, to gain their rights. I should say decidedly the business could be done in much less time. As banks close at four and one on Saturdays, I see no difficulty in inducing the public to shop before seven, which would mean closing one or two hours earlier than at present. Felt the injurious effects during my experience as assistant in London ; hours, thirteen per day, and fifteen on Saturday. In the season, the hours were fourteen or fifteen as on Saturdays. It may be possible by persuasion to lessen the hours, but from the agitation so long carried on, the result now visible, it will take a very long period to persuade. Although not in favour of compulsion, I cannot do other than support any appeal that may be made to Parliament to pass a bill which will operate in the interests of assistants by compelling employers to close earlier.

T. H. B., age 41, draper, Market Street, Newcastle. Causes : adherence to old habits. Consequence : loss of health to assistants, &c. Remedy : uniform earlier closing. My firm does twice the business between nine and six winter, and nine and seven summer, it did sixteen years ago in one hour and two hours longer per day. Our men used to suffer very much from the effects. In Newcastle, the market day is Saturday, and no other day could conveniently be made a half-holiday. We give to all our workpeople closing at one or four o'clock. For ten or twelve years the large places of business in Newcastle have closed at six winter, and seven summer, and Saturdays at nine o'clock, but all the smaller places of busi-



ness (which are less healthy as a rule) keep open one hour per day longer. Most of these latter profess to be willing to close earlier, but this could only be done by the movement being general.

James D., age 46, grocer and provision dealer. The causes are many : discord (want of unity), young beginners encroach, men who are short of funds, and have bills to meet, do the same, and often jealousy, greed, and envious feelings. I suggest legislation. I am quite sure it would succeed. Whereas we now close at ten we could as easily close at eight, and do our business better. Yes, I have suffered, the hours are too many for anyone to be on their legs. I suffer in my back, feet, and legs, and sometimes as the hours grow late I am obliged to give up and leave it. I do not agree with the half-holiday, and it will not do in a poor neighbourhood. It is the difference of opinion of traders, some are for it and some against. Some shops close and some remain open. It never will stand, and I consider it a public inconvenience and also a trade inconvenience. We could not close at six or seven in working neighbourhoods where men are paid daily and live from hand to mouth. For instance, they buy their supper after they have earned it, and perhaps not be home till seven o'clock or later. We could close at eight on five days and ten on Saturday. Young men as a rule do not stop long enough in one situation to note any change in this respect. I do not know of any, but they complain of the long hours, and very justly too. I do allow them half-an-hour or more, and those of them who live-out take an hour to dinner, and about half or more for other meals. I would be only too happy to close at eight on five days and ten on Saturdays, but could not give each man an evening once a week, but as I do now, one has an evening one week, and another the next, sometimes two go in one week if convenient. It never can or will be done (to stand) by persuasion. A general earlier closing, and offenders to be fined. I consider the five o'clock movement has its bad effects as well as its good ones, and may be very nice for those who had home or friends near at hand, but when employers close their establishments at five o'clock, they (as a rule) wish all their assistants to go out. Now for those who have no friends near, it is very awkward, especially in the winter or any bad weather. Where are these young people to go? perhaps with others into gay society. I have heard young men say they spend more in the one evening when they close at five, than they earn in the week. I fear this is the case with many of them, and when they have the opportunity they take the younger ones into their company. A great many assistants do not wish this five o'clock closing, but prefer a little extra rest every day, and less hours of labour. The class I find for the five o'clock movement are those most fond of pleasure, and not the best for work, or to study the interest of their employers (or their own); they are what we term a faster-going class. Of course we have the



four Bank holidays and Good Friday, and if my assistants want a day they have it, and in the summer a week in the country if they wish. This is less inconvenience than five o'clock closing ; but we often receive goods from railways, carmen, &c., even after eight o'clock P.M., but I consider eight would be quite late enough for that. It would also help the carmen and others.

John H., North Shields, draper, age 62, with forty years experience. The causes are that ladies prefer shopping late, and working men's wives with families cannot get out until their husbands return from work. The consequences are, no doubt, injurious to health ; the only remedy is to induce early shopping through agitation and the public press. It is a fact that the same amount of business could be done in much less time, I would say from nine till five, except Saturdays, when business might cease at nine o'clock. No doubt I have suffered from long hours, but my success is owing to great industry and long hours. I don't know a greater injustice to drapers than the half-holiday, as it completely upsets business for the remainder of the week, and men who wish to pay twenty shillings in the pound will never submit to it. The large drapers do close at seven on five days during the week, and at ten on Saturdays, while the small drapers do not close till eight and nine, five days, and twelve on Saturdays. I cannot say that any of my assistants have suffered, only I find that delicate boys are not fit for the drapery trade, no doubt owing to long hours. I do allow my assistants half-an-hour for each meal, and the hours are from nine till seven, except on Saturdays, nine till ten. I strongly object to a half-holiday, as it is most injurious to trade. I think it possible to shorten the hours of labour, but only by persuasion. I am like all large drapers disposed to go for shorter hours, but cannot see how it is to be carried out, unless the small drapers, who keep no assistants, join us, as at present they keep open from one and a half to two hours later than we do.

William H., High Street, Peckham, S.E., age 30, bootmaker and dealer. The inhabitants of locality being principally clerks, and those engaged in town during the day, do their shopping after they have left their business, which is generally from seven to nine in the evening. We could do our business in much less time if circumstances permitted ; cannot say how much less, as circumstances have never occurred allowing judgment. Cannot trace any ill-effects to hours to which I have been accustomed. The cause of long hours is want of unity among traders. Cause of five o'clock Thursday closing breaking up was principally through those traders who did not employ assistants. If the custom was general, would with pleasure close earlier. Persuasion will never entirely shorten the hours, compulsory closing of shops might. Much desire a general earlier closing. Those notes should be



read as the experience of a small shopkeeper who has never employed more than three assistants at one time, but who feels that it would be unjust to compel him to release his assistants at a certain hour, while his neighbour, possibly, who does not employ assistants, and may be unthrifty, imprudent, and perhaps a more selfish man than the other, can keep his establishment open to any hour he pleases.

Thomas P., High Street, Peckham, tea merchant, age 32. Our business could be done in quite one hour less each day, including Saturday. My assistants have rather more than half-an-hour for meals. If all in my trade would do the same, I have no objection to close earlier. I certainly wish for an earlier general closing. The great evil in our way of closing earlier is no doubt the public-houses; if they were to close on Saturday at ten or eleven o'clock we could close as well, for some years ago when they kept open till half-past twelve o'clock, our shops were nearly always full till a quarter past. Now that they close at twelve we can close at half-past eleven o'clock, and the streets are deserted by twelve o'clock, but in the earlier part of the week public-houses do not stand in our way of closing.

Moses J., Kentish Town Road, draper, age 27. I scarcely know who is to blame with regard to long hours of labour, whether the shopkeepers or customers, perhaps both. I certainly think that all shopkeepers should be compelled to close their establishments at a much earlier hour than the generality of us do at present; we should all reap the benefit in so doing. Am thoroughly convinced, having lived in four of the leading houses in London, that the same amount of business could be done in almost half the time, still it would not be wise to close the shops before seven or eight o'clock, except in the fashionable parts of London, as there are scores, servants, etc., who are not at liberty at all times of the day. Personally, I have not felt any bodily ill-effects from the long hours, but I daresay I should be a stronger man if I had more time for recreation, &c. The cause of long hours is for the want of firm and noble principles as well as more sympathy for our assistants. If we had a general half-holiday none would lose by it. As I have already stated, it is not practicable for all classes of people to make their purchases before six o'clock, therefore I do not hold with being compelled to close before seven or even eight o'clock, and nine to ten o'clock on Saturday. I have only been in business little more than two years, and during that time none of my assistants have suffered in health. I may add that young ladies come to the shop at 9.15 A.M. and leave about the same hour in the evening; they also get from two o'clock every fortnight, the five o'clock movement having come to grief in this street. Should the custom become general, I would willingly



allow my assistants half-an-hour for each meal, but with respect to releasing them at five o'clock once a week, it suits me better to allow them from two o'clock once a fortnight, and indeed they like it best, at least my young ladies do. Of course if there was a general half-holiday it would be a different thing. I really do not think it is possible to shorten the hours of shop labour by persuasion. We must have an Act of Parliament to compel all shopkeepers to close their shops at a reasonable hour. I do not know of any other remedy, indeed, I think that such an Act would be beneficial to the whole community, directly and indirectly, except perhaps the Gas Company, and I sincerely hope we shall soon have a Bill passed for that purpose.

Alfred B., age 35, Southwark Park Road, S.E., corn merchant. The cause of long hours is excessive competition and greed. Overwork, illness, and very often death. Persuasion having been tried, and not answering, there is nothing else but legislation. Business could be done in fifteen, or at the least twelve hours per week. I have felt headaches and want of energy in the morning when you ought to feel at your best. The excessive greed and avarice of not more than five per cent. of all the shopkeepers is the cause of the half-holiday breaking down. I should be pleased to give my assistants the time stated if others would do so. The hours cannot be shortened by persuasion, but by legislation. I close now at five o'clock on Thursday, and am the only one in my trade that does so in this district. There is no solid reason for shops to keep open the hours they do. In my opinion the work could be done, and done better, in a great deal shorter time, to the mutual benefit and advantage of both shopkeepers and their customers. There would be a great saving of expenses on gas, &c., and a very great advantage to the tradesmen in having his evenings with his family or friends, which I contend would be a tremendous benefit to him by the relaxation it would give him from the worry and anxiety of business. As for the employés, it would enable them to attend classes of all kinds for their instruction and edification, which they cannot attend now. If not classes, there are during the summer, rowing, cricketing, and other clubs they could join, from all of which they are now shut out. With the customers it would be a great deal of good, for they would stay at home of an evening because the shops would be shut up, and there would be nothing for them to see, and no doubt in time it would lead to their going to bed a great deal earlier than they do now, which I think would be a great benefit to them. There is no doubt that these long hours for shop attendants have caused the death of a great many of them. My youngest brother was in the drapery trade, and the long hours brought him to such a degree of weakness that it laid him up several times, and eventually killed him at the age of twenty-four years. I know a young fellow who was employed by



a very respectable draper in Bermondsey, who has had to leave his situation and go back to the country, for his medical man told him if he did not it would kill him.

James H., Old Kent Road, S.E., draper, age 54. The causes of long hours, in my opinion, are competition, smallness of trading capital, leading to accepting of bills, easy credit, and long dates, jealousy of other traders and the smaller shops out of the main thoroughfares. The consequences are detrimental, morally, physically, and politically, manliness superseded by slavery; the higher aspirations of mind and intellect crushed; shut out of society other than contracted in business; religiously and politically dismembered, and lapses into a mere chattel; and, if through thrift and industry a good fortune realized in a measure, and the rights of citizenship acquired, an ignorance to disseminate, and a tool in the hands of either party who has the first opportunity. The business could be done in much less time. In the class of trade in this locality, 7.30 P.M. in winter months, 8.30 P.M. in the summer season; Saturdays, 10 and 10.30 P.M. I have had to leave town several times besides the usual holiday, once for six months rest and change, and also to take a situation in the country for nearly four years. Had I not taken that step, I do not believe my system could have borne the strain of the past few years. Long hours are the result of the apathy of the assistants, caused in a measure by taking no part in getting it, and who when enjoying it, did little to support it; many, alas! like the Southern slaves who did not know at first how to use such liberty, and did not realize the boon conferred. Also did not do their part to influence the public. It did not as a movement exist long enough to right itself, and cutting off the evening trade on that day made it often a blank, and the before and succeeding days did not compensate. It was also at a time when trade was passing through a depression such as has not been felt for many years. This had an influence with the employers, as also the two or three in the several localities who would not close, in order to take advantage of their fellow-traders generally. I believe also that many of the traders did not know how to employ the season of recreation the evening afforded. The hours mentioned (six during the week and ten on Saturday) I think are too early for the general trade in this part of South London. We are now about to give up business because of failing health, and the very late hours of trading with no chances of improvement. Should fall in very agreeably with the majority, and think requisite for the assistants, if the employers would wish to have all the physical and mental powers of their assistants fully developed. After a long experience, and also co-operation with my assistants, I believe all mutual engagements to be futile and worthless, producing want of faith in each other, &c.; and if carried out, which it has failed to do in the majority of cases, has



to contend with fresh importations of new traders, who keep open to catch stray customers, and who by such unfair measures too often gain a footing, and at the same time lengthen the hours. I think the Shop Hours' Labour League are taking a right step to remedy, and others will follow. As it regards the public (middle class and mechanics), I have very little faith in their sympathy or support ; they will have their wants supplied at their own hours and opportunities. Very few will support an employer out of sympathy, because such employer has a care and interest for those who serve him, and not a few are obliged to prolong the hours to protect their own interest. I think the new Bankruptcy Bill will help the early closing movement, as it will produce a degree of caution which has been much wanting on the part of small capitalists rushing into business, and who have to be kept afloat by bills and long credit. These have been the greatest obstacles, as they are helpless even where they inclined to do as their neighbours, whilst other selfish ones are like parasites feeding upon others. The application of the Act to be introduced by Mr Sutherst will remedy in a measure, and it will be a severe fight to pass it, as it affects all trades generally, and the outcry great. I shall rejoice to see our growing population relieved of the excessive toil lengthened hours entail. It is because of its silent though not less destructive effects upon our youth that it has not come to the front before, and I trust our adult population writhing also under its influences, will not fail to send up a bitter cry—not that it will persuade the public who are their customers to help, but our legislators to devise those measures which will be beyond the control of those who would, while enjoying liberty themselves, limit such to others, and curtail advantages they themselves enjoy. The late hours also influence our youth in the choice of a trade, &c., and with our increasing educational advantages, any calling with earlier and shorter hours will be overstocked, producing disadvantages and results best avoided. I am persuaded we cannot estimate the improvement in society and social life if this evil were modified or removed, which in many cases takes away life's sweetness, and breeds depression, etc., and making souls feel as if the whole weight of the curse rested upon them.

Julius J. J. C., Bermondsey New Road, S.E., age 32. The causes of long hours are selfishness, no doubt combined with a fear lest any trade will be lost by earlier closing. Consequences : no time for mental improvement, and in many cases indolent habits after business. Remedy : legislation. Certainly the same business could be done in much less time—two or three hours less. I have not improved in health—rather the reverse—and cannot but attribute it to long hours, having lived in early closing houses previous to coming here. We cannot understand the breaking-down



of the half-holiday, unless it has been caused by persons opening again who have been in close proximity to large shops who close early on Saturdays. I could, if purchasers would shop early, close at 6 or 7 on five days of the week, and at 9 or 10 on a Saturday. My assistants have not suffered, with the exception of occasional headaches on Sunday mornings. We don't see how, in business, we can guarantee any length of time for meals. Our young people have as long as they wish, and are seldom called away. I would willingly reduce the hours if all did the same. The remedy is by legislation. We hope this paper will not be considered of too interrogatory a character by the majority of tradesmen. Have filled it in, hoping it may be of service to the cause of early closing. Late closing is horrible in its consequences. No time for mental improvement or healthy exercise, home duties, and for the enjoyment of those blessings which make life happy. With regard to our young people we endeavour to make them comfortable and happy, and therefore do not think of them as being oppressed and overworked, and have always found them take great interest in our business. We think that the church should be more interested in this work, as in the case of the Blue Ribbon Army little work, we believe, was done until the matter was taken up by the clergy and dissenting ministers. Why should not all ministers be asked by the Shop Hours Labour League to do their utmost to mitigate this evil? If every minister recommended early closing and condemned late closing, we should find a lack of customers after 7 P.M. and a greater attendance at the evening services in many of the churches. We believe it to be an interest to every minister, the early closing movement.

James F., Caledonian Road, King's Cross, age 35, grocer and tea dealer. Cause is through the want of union among tradesmen, and the fear of another getting the last penny. Instead of being fourteen hours, it could be done in ten hours. Four of my assistants have suffered through illness, and one has died from the long hours. I do think if the hours of labour could be shortened it would be better for me and my assistants, as I do not feel fit to go to the house of God on Sunday for the want of rest. If the public knew we shut up say 9 or 10 I do think they would come, instead of keeping open to 12 o'clock. The same amount of business could be done in less the time, and if done soon, I am sure it would pay me better, what with the gas, &c. I know it does not pay me after 8 on week nights and 10 on Saturday, so if it could be altered it would be better for all.

Lewis Spokes R., Newtown Row, Birmingham, age 35, draper, &c. Small shop-keepers will keep open late, consequently larger ones keep open longer than they otherwise would, and the lower



class, as a rule, shop after they leave their work. An Act of Parliament is, in my opinion, the only remedy. The business could be done in one-third less time. We have never tried the half-holiday, and think it impracticable in so large a town. My assistants already have what time they think well, which often exceeds half-an-hour for meals. Many shops are only open twelve hours a day, but the majority keep open as long, if not longer, than in the populous parts of London.

Joseph B., draper, age 48. Cause: severe competition of the times, and want of thought on the part of the public. I cannot suggest any remedy, but believe the movement is progressing. Business could be done in two or three hours less daily. Have felt the ill effects of long hours.

John L., Carlton Street, Nottingham, haberdasher, age 40. I believe legislation is the only remedy for long hours. I have suffered much from the long hours, having in my time worked fifteen hours and more per day, which tried my system that I ruptured a blood vessel on my right lung, and was laid up for six months through over work. We do close on Thursdays at one o'clock, and have done so for a long time, and have found the returns satisfactory. I think my females have suffered through standing on their feet so many hours, one at least. I allow the half day, and on Saturdays I let them leave at half-past 9 P.M., and close at half-past 10. We have tried persuasion for some years in our town, but we cannot make it general. Thursday is a very quiet day in Nottingham, at least the best day for closing shops.

George W., grocer and provision merchant, St James Street an High Street, Derby. Cause: late shopping cultivated by many tradesmen. Unpunctuality in closing. Remedy: legislation. Hours in this town vary from 8 A.M. to 7 P.M. to 8 A.M. to 8 P.M., with 10 and 11 on Saturdays. Without any effort might be curtailed two hours each day. My business giving plenty of exercise, cannot say I have suffered except on Saturdays. Cause of half-holiday breaking through is want of grit in employers, and the apathy displayed by the assistants. One of my assistants is away now and has been three weeks. Doctor says it is the confinement which has caused his illness. In fact I closed at one on Wednesdays for six months and stood alone, but have been obliged to open again. If it is contemplated to ask Parliament to bring the Factory Act downstairs as well as use it in the workroom, my opinion is it will be a dead failure, as it is now. I believe it is correct that there is one inspector for the three counties of Leicester, Nottingham, and Derby, with all their manufactories and workrooms. How can he do a thousandth part of the work? Workrooms have been carried on in this town in a shameful



manner for eighteen months, entirely disregarding all clauses or nearly so of the Act, before being visited. I would suggest lady inspectors, thinking they would have more sympathy with their own sex. Legislation efficiently carried out is the only remedy. The drapers and boot trade in this town are the worst by one or two hours every night later than most trades, the boot trade being the worst by far.

Thomas S., Blackman Street, S.E., hatter. Cause: keen competition and the excessive late hours the shops are open in my immediate neighbourhood. Apply the Factory Acts to all persons under twenty-one years of age. Business could be done in nine hours per day. Now the hours are from 8 A.M. to 9.30 P.M., Saturday from 8 A.M. to 12 midnight. I suffer from sluggish liver and bodily depression. I always make it a practice to allow my assistants one and a half hour for meals, and a half-holiday every week. In the hat trade in this district I have tried in every possible way to induce the employers to close at 8 P.M. all week, except Saturday at 10 P.M. and on Thursday at 5 P.M.; but owing to the obstinacy of one large shop on the extreme part of our district, the movement fell through, and in the face of great competition I shall be compelled in March to give up Thursday 5 o'clock closing, as I am the only hatter in the district who now closes. I may add that before I started in business for myself I was here five years. The hours were half-past 7 in the morning till 10 P.M. every night but Saturday, when it was 12 P.M., then had two miles to walk to reach my home, and during the five years I only had four days' holidays. It quite prevented my attending any place of worship on Sunday, as I was so fatigued that I was glad to sit about and rest in my home on that the only day I had free. I do hope you will succeed and secure the passage of a bill in Parliament to help us, for if I as master find the long hours hard and trying, what must it be to a growing boy, with no chance of getting fresh air and a change of scenery, or even a few hours' recreation in the whole week. I feel sure, if compulsory closing at 8 P.M. is the law, we shall not lose any of our trade, and the reduced expenses in the gas will more than reconcile employers to the movement.

Isaac W., Newington Causeway, age 27, clothier. The hours here are 9 till 8, and 9 till 10 on Saturdays. We should like if possible to make it 9 till 7, and 9 till 9 Saturdays, but our trade being more with the working class this would be impossible. I suggest legislation, after much study, as being the only means of remedying present long hours in shops generally. The same amount of business could easily be done in half the time; in fact, we very often do more business between 6 and 8 P.M. than between 9 A.M. and 6 P.M. In this trade (clothing) it would be almost



impossible to close earlier than 8 through the week and 10 on Saturdays, our trade being largely with the working man, who leaves off work at 6, and consequently has no opportunity for shopping until 7 or half-past. I should most certainly not object to close earlier. At present I allow one hour for dinner, half-hour for tea. The hours at present are eleven for the five days, and thirteen on Saturday, and one evening a fortnight off at 5 P.M. It is, in my opinion, not possible to shorten the hours by persuasion. I most certainly wish for a general earlier closing, although, as you see, the hours are not long in my particular case, but short hours are the exception, long over the rule.

Samuel G., Chip. Ter., Har. Road, age 65, boot and shoe establishment. Causes: anxiety of tradesmen to get the last halfpenny which the public can spend. Remedy: Act of Parliament to make all close at a certain hour. Business could be done in much less time—very much less—five or six hours less. I frequently feel the ill effects of the long hours. An insignificant minority ruling the majority breaks through the half-holiday. My assistants have suffered from long hours. I should only be too glad to close earlier.

Frederick P., age 45, Sneinton Street, Nottingham, draper. The public are to some extent the cause of long hours; they delay their shopping until the evening, both winter and summer. I suffer from bad eyes from the effects of gas. The weekly half-holiday has not broken down in Nottingham. I have closed at one o'clock on Thursdays for some years. I am president of the Thursday Half-Holiday Association. I have found it impossible to close at six or seven in summer, in any class of trade. I close at a quarter to eight, so that all assistants leave the shop at eight o'clock, and prompt at one o'clock on Thursdays. We never had a serious case of illness, and very rarely have to call in a doctor. My assistants are much in advance as regards time for meals, and work less hours per week than you are asking for. I firmly believe in persuasion, and you are doing much good by bringing the evils of long hours constantly before the public. I have in my establishment ten experienced young men, all single, and living in the house; one has been seventeen years, another eleven, and others several years, all well conducted steady men. We find them grateful for the trouble taken on their behalf, and I find they appreciate a comfortable home. I have been in business twenty-four years in the same shop, and believe the Thursday half-holiday to be a great boon to masters and assistants, and great benefit to their health. I shall be very glad to answer any questions. I have a brother in business in the drapery, in Nottingham, also doing well, who would become a member if you sent him a form.



James A., boot salesman, age 39, Battersea Park Road, and other places. Causes : greed of some shopkeepers ; if people could not shop at nine, they would do it at eight. Twelve hours a day sufficient for any one to keep shop open. I do not suffer, as I can take a walk if I feel disposed. I would prefer to close every evening at seven or eight, Saturdays excepted, and then at ten. Shops will never be closed by persuasion, I shall never attempt it again. Legislation is the only remedy, which I should heartily approve of.

Elizabeth B., Jamaica Road, Bermondsey, S.E. The business I carry on is that of a fancy repository. If you can show me any useful purpose that will be served by the statement of my age, I am willing to furnish it. My shop is open from 8.30 A.M. to 9 P.M. The gentleman who framed these questions would seem to have had little practical acquaintance with business, or he would know that at Christmas, or some such very heavy time, as much may be taken in a day as in a week of slack time. Is it proposed, therefore, to give the minimum time for business? If so, one day a week would suffice, if such days as those referred to. The cause of the half-holiday failing is the unwisdom of ever having proposed it. Our assistant has half a day (*i.e.*, from two o'clock) once a fortnight, and I have no reason to suppose she is dissatisfied, or that her health is being impaired. Our assistant is never hurried over her meals. I do not propose to make any alteration in present practice in other respects. Moral suasion may do something, together with the more sensible and considerate feeling which I believe to be spreading. I deprecate earlier closing, until it is possible without danger to trade. I told those who urged for it, and consider so still, that in these critical times, when business is so precarious, it was a most unwise thing to take any course which would cause a particular day to be regarded as a sort of off-day,—one on which it was not expected to do much trade. I am astonished that tradesmen should have advocated the Thursday closing, and not at all surprised the experiment should have collapsed. I extremely regret there should be unfeeling employers who care little or nothing for the health of those in their service, but in view of public opinion and growing enlightenment, I think their number is decreasing.

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#### WHAT DOCTORS SAY.

Alfred Matcham, 13 Gladstone Street, St George's Road, Southwark, S.E. The effect of long hours upon all, old and young, male and female, physically, mentally, and morally, cannot really



be estimated ; it is a matter of degree so far as old and young are concerned. The young, of course, are far less able to stand the consequent fatigue of working for twelve hours in an atmosphere highly charged with impurities, than adults, but these in their turn must suffer in every conceivable way. The time allowed for meals should be : breakfast, thirty minutes ; dinner (middle day), one hour ; tea, thirty minutes. Shops properly lighted *i.e.*, not requiring gas by day, and efficiently ventilated do not injure health by the atmosphere contained therein. The diseases likely to be caused by long hours are consumption, liver derangement, palpitation of heart, nervous and general physical exhaustion, amenorrhœa (in females), swelling of feet and legs, premature whiteness of the hair, baldness, and impairment of the whole of the functions of the body. From eight in the morning until eight at night, deducting the above specified times for meals and rest, is quite long enough for any shopkeeper or assistant to work. Yes, numbers of cases are constantly coming under my care. Those I have most frequently met with are given above.

Leonard Lane, M.D. Lond., M.R.C.S., L.S.A., Munster Precincts, Peterborough. Upon girls and boys under sixteen the prolonged shop hours are bad physically, producing general debility, and as a consequence mental weakness. Girls under eighteen are especially injured by long standing in dark, close, and unventilated shops. Adults receive less injury, but for them as for all, the gas and foul atmosphere are injurious. All require exercise in the fresh air for some time daily, to counteract the ill effects of prolonged confinement in a shop. One hour for dinner, half-an-hour for other meals is the least time that ought to be allowed. Generally dark, badly ventilated, especially at night when the gas is lit, and unhealthy. The diseases caused by long hours and standing are, anæmia, consumption, uterine disorders, &c. In less degree, headaches, neuralgia, dyspepsia, and general malaise. From eight to ten hours at the outside is sufficiently long for young persons under eighteen to work ; for adults, probably up to twelve hours. Many cases of illness and disease caused by shop labour have come under my notice.

Robert Bentham, M.D., 29 Darnley Road, Hackney, and Ellerslie, Willesden, N.W. It is highly injurious, exhausting to both body and mind, making it impossible to discharge their duty, nor can assistants feel, or take an interest in the affairs of their employers, as they should and would do under more favourable circumstances. Not less than half-an-hour should be allowed for each meal. Nine or ten hours is quite long enough to work in a shop, for anyone who wishes to be healthy. Innumerable cases of death and disease, resulting from shop-labour, have come under my notice. For above twenty-five years I have acted



as one of the honorary medical officers of the Early Closing Association, consequently during that time many shop-assistants have consulted me. I observe long hours to have, in the first instance, a most depressing influence; this leads to unsound and unrefreshing sleep, impairs the digestive function, and at length decided consumptive symptoms are developed. At this stage, unless a complete change can be obtained, in a short time death is the result. As the medical officer of an insurance company, on investigating the claims arising, I find that shop-assistants and clerks give the largest percentage of phthisis, other employments giving a comparatively less number, showing incontestibly that the employment in shops is a fruitful source of that terrible disease, the influence of which descends to a succeeding generation.

George M. Carfrae, M.D. Edin., 4 Hertford Street, Mayfair, W. I think it absolutely wrong that girls and boys under sixteen should be allowed to stand for sixteen hours out of the twenty-four. Eight hours is the utmost that they should work. Indeed I think that adults ought not to do more than eight hours' such work in the twenty-four. These long hours, I have no hesitation in saying, must prove injurious to the physical, moral, and mental development of the frame. The exact form in which the injurious effects show themselves will depend on the temperament, and may differ in each case. One hour at least ought to be allowed for each meal. As a rule the atmosphere of shops is not conducive to health; but there is no reason why shops should not be made perfectly wholesome by good ventilation. The long hours and constant standing will form spinal curvature in girls, dyspepsia and lung disease in both sexes. I have seen uterine disease produced by working too long at sewing machine—those, *i.e.*, worked by the feet.

For other important medical evidence see paragraph "The Medical Voice."

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#### WHAT MINISTERS OF RELIGION SAY.

Rev. G. W. M'Cree, Borough Road Chapel, S.W. Yes, for many years I have noticed the effect of long hours. I regard the long hours a deterioration in every way, and if Sunday trading be added, the effects are most disastrous. That shopkeepers and assistants should attend on a Sunday morning, it cannot be expected; even if they came to chapel they are often sleepy, and



soon weary even of a good sermon. They have no chance of attending meetings of any description during the week. I have observed long hours are very exhausting especially to young women. This must do them harm in every way. I should like to see all shops shut at eight o'clock; a half-holiday on Wednesday or Thursday; and all shops closed at 10.30 at the latest on Saturday nights. Sunday trading I regard as a sad calamity to all concerned, and in no case necessary. Working men get their wages sufficiently early to shop in time on Saturday. Nearly all my family kept shops, and none of them were ever open on Sundays. Yet good business was done in articles of daily consumption, and, mark this, we all went to chapel every Sunday morning. A similar course would be an unspeakable blessing to the shop keepers of London.

Rev. A. J. Bridgman, 6 Mountfoot Crescent, N. For some time past the shops in Caledonian Road, and elsewhere in Islington, have been closed early on Thursdays, and a slight improvement has been manifested in the health of the employés. No, the shops are kept open so late on Saturday that the tradesmen tell me they are unable to enjoy the morning service. In consequence of the fatigued condition of the parents, the attendance at Sunday-school is much smaller than that of the afternoon.

Rev. J. Gilbert Dixon, M.A., St George's Rectory, Birmingham. I consider long hours and constant standing physically exhausting. The mind cannot be vigorous as it should be and would be if the body were not so continuously overtaxed. The whole man becomes to some extent demoralised. I find that very many cannot attend, or if they do, they cannot keep awake. I might instance the case of a draper who wished to assist in the work of an early Sunday morning adult school, but found himself on his return home to breakfast so weary that he could only sit in his chair and sleep. Church going on Sunday morning was out of the question. They cannot possibly attend classes or lectures; the hour of release is in many cases too late and the mind too weary. I have known many cases of failure of health through the long hours.

Rev. J. S. Webber, 57 Oakley Square, N.W., Chaplain of University College Hospital. I have noticed the result of long hours upon the assistants employed at the smaller houses of business. Have met with many a young girl broken down in health with the brain weakened. Instead of getting a walk after business, or enjoying some other healthy recreation, they have resorted to stimulants in the shape of intoxicating drinks to keep up (as they fancy) the poor fragile frame. We find in our Sunday-schools that the few teachers who are assistants in shops cannot get to school on Sunday morning. This also applies to church. The shop assistant is at a terrible disadvantage compared with the mechanic.



Many of the former cannot leave business until nine or ten every evening, and twelve o'clock on Saturday. With body and mind so exhausted, whatever educational advantages might offer they are too exhausted to do anything but rest.

Rev. George M. Murphy, 8 Finchley Road, S.E., Borough Road Congregational Church, Member School Board for London. The long hours and constant standing is disastrous in all respects and in every degree. Some few very earnest Christians and teachers are able to attend on a Sunday morning. But most either are too much used up, or deem themselves so to be. They are conspicuous by their absence. As to meetings they cannot attend for obvious reasons; classes, lectures, &c., usually begin from 8 to 8.30, just at the time when they are shutting up shop, clearing windows, and summing up the day's affairs.

Rev. Thomas Davies, M.A., 46 Kennington Oval, S.E. The results of long hours are unquestionably enfeebled health, a morbid intellect, and a desire to relieve this by recourse to stimulants, &c. The majority of assistants plead inability to leave their rest, Sunday morning, and when they do, they complain that the morning service is long, whilst to others it is not so. I fear that there are many advantages which the young men of the artizan class avail themselves of, but shop-assistants cannot. I do not remember any instance of shop attendants failing altogether, but many girls have broken down, who have to work long hours. Young girls who stand behind the counter have frequently complained of pain in the side, and loss of appetite. Some cases of varicose veins in the leg I have seen. I think the objects of the Association will be ultimately reached by persistent effort. It is difficult but not impossible to change people's habits.

Rev. T. R. Stevenson, St Mary's Gate Chapel, Derby. Long hours and constant standing are unquestionably bad in every respect. The majority of shopkeepers and assistants cannot presently get to a place of worship on a Sunday. Within the last few weeks a young person, employed in a millinery establishment has met with her death mainly through overwork. I know at the present time of young ladies whose health is suffering from long hours of labour in shops.

Rev. Francis A. Allen, 208 Stanhope Street, N.W., Curate of St Matthew's Church, Oakley Square, N.W. My experience is not only gathered from this locality, but also from three years' experience as Secretary to the Early Closing Association, 100 Fleet Street. There can be no question that the long hours are detrimental in every way. Many employers have confessed to me that their health is ruined by former long hours, and that they have no pleasure in life. Here the shops keep open till ten, eleven, and on



Saturdays later, and the air is simply poisonous when you go into them. There is also much immorality, and I believe the late hours' system causes or gives occasion for it. Saturday is so heavy a day that they work on to the small hours of the morning. The result is that most of the churches round here are half empty in the mornings. We have started a Young Men's Society, but young people can't come before 8.30 or 9 at the earliest, and this makes us terribly late. I have not been here long enough, but I see plenty of pale faces in the shops. But when a girl loses colour and health, which she is sure to do in a year or two, she has to go. I consider the late hour system most diabolical. By depriving young people of opportunities for rest and relaxation it shortens life, brings on many diseases, renders them joyless, desponding, and often desperate and vicious. No wonder irreligion and vice and discontent reign triumphant in so many parts of our great city. The physical degradation of the people alone accounts for it. I think it the first duty of the State to protect those who on account of the overstocked state of the labour market cannot effectively combine to protect themselves. I do not wish to be understood, however, as insinuating that shop assistants are a vicious class. As a rule they are extremely respectable and well conducted, and so deserve fair treatment, which at present they certainly do not get. If they broke a few windows, Mr Gladstone would immediately discover that they must be legislated for.

Rev. William Copeland Bowie, Minister of Stamford Street Unitarian Church, living at 4 Wincott Street, Kensington Road, S.E. Ever since I settled in this neighbourhood I have been deeply grieved by the evil results of long hours on shopkeepers and their assistants. One has only to observe what is going on to see clearly that the effects of this system are physically, mentally, and morally very injurious indeed. There is neither time nor opportunity for developing body, mind, or character while the present long hours are retained. So far as my knowledge and experience go, I believe only a very few retail dealers and assistants are in the habit of attending morning school or service; and those who do come are usually late, and they frequently complain about being tired and worn out. Not only is this the case with sellers, I believe the system has an evil effect on buyers too. They stay out shopping so very late on Saturday that they find it convenient to lie in bed on Sunday until the day is far spent. They are not able to avail themselves of the educational agencies open to other people. Again and again assistants and shopkeepers have told me how desirous they were to attend some classes or lectures, and yet it was impossible for them to attend on account of their late hours. I am very much interested in the whole question, and I should very much like to see some thing attempted and done to put a stop to the worst evils of late shopping. I see very well that



the difficulties that stand in the way of any legislative measure are many and serious. Personally I am always reluctant to resort to Acts of Parliament in order to make people do what they ought to do in justice to themselves and to those whom they employ; and if there seemed any chance of succeeding by moral suasion, good example, and combination among shopkeepers and their assistants, I should be content to agitate on those lines. But I am afraid the feelings of selfishness, prejudice, envy, and ill-will are too strong; and so I see nothing for it but to adopt the programme of the League, leaving the specific measure or measures to the free and full discussion of disinterested and patriotic men.

Rev. Henry Shaen Solly, M.A., 4 Bevois Hill Terrace, Southampton. I have had no difficulty in noticing the injurious effects of the long hours quite as much on shopkeepers as on their assistants. Different people are very differently affected, but certainly the weariness and the want of appetite, produced by long hours and lack of fresh air, produce much intemperance. Many young women have been driven "into the streets" by it. In large establishments the arrangements are generally the best and most humane, and would be still better if it were not for the unscrupulous slave-driving, which often prevails in smaller shops. Very rarely can they attend either morning or afternoon. Sunday is the only day on which they can get any fresh air before sunset, and it often seems a mockery to urge people to attend divine service when that deprives them of their only chance of getting a walk into the country. On Sunday evenings they can better attend service, and to a large extent avail themselves of the opportunity. It is most difficult to arrange classes which they can attend. 8.30 P.M. is often too early for them to come, and then their minds are thoroughly jaded with the long hours, consequently even those who make a beginning seldom find it possible to persevere. A chemist's assistant writes to me: "Having worked myself from eight in the morning till ten at night, and three hours on Sunday evenings for five years, I know a little of what it is." He specially refers to the hardships of apprentices. A person who gives me his name but wishes it not to be published, writes:—"I have a son in a grocer's shop in the High Street, not very strong, who suffers from the late hours; being kept occasionally till nine sometimes half-past, when he ought to leave at eight, from seven in the morning. If an assistant were to take a few pence every now and then of his master's, the law would step in and punish him, and secure his master's rights, but when the master robs the assistant of his time, the time he needs for recreation and health, nothing is done." My personal opinion is that the provisions of the Factory Acts should be extended, so as to afford similar protection to women and children earning wages in shops. Then, I am sure, some further



legislation will be needed, as otherwise our shops will be compelled to close, say at 7 P.M., while another in the same business, and close by, might be kept open till 11 P.M., because served only by men or members of the owner's family. Such a situation would be intolerable, and most prejudicial to the interests of women, whose wages it would greatly depress. I would meet the difficulty by empowering the local authorities of each city or town to call meetings of the various trades, and to pass and enforce local by-laws, which shall express the wish of the trade in regard to hours of opening and closing. At present, a minority of one or two men in a trade can rule the rest, as experience has shown again and again. I should like to see the trades organised with guilds, with powers, carefully defined by law, which will give the majority fairer opportunities of carrying their wishes into effect.

Rev. W. H. Tickell, 20 King Edward Street, Lambeth Road, S.E. I have noticed the effect of long hours and constant standing on shopkeepers and their assistants. The results are :—Physical evils—stunted growth, weakened and debilitated constitutions. Mental evils—dulness, disinclination to engage in mental pursuits, inability to take part in thoughtful exercises of the mind. Moral evils—seeking pleasure in many places of amusements that are open to them, many of which, alas ! are far from being morally healthful ; and prevented from attending other places where the body, mind, and spirit, could be purely recreated. By far the greater number only attend evening service, the invariable excuse being the exceeding weariness consequent on long hours in business. Assistants cannot attend lectures or meetings during the week for two reasons—1st, the lateness of the hours of closing preventing attendance in many cases ; and 2nd, the entire indisposition to attend consequent on the protracted confinement in close and unhealthy rooms and shops. In connection with long hours in shops, I have observed on the part of some of the assistants (female more especially), an anxiety to break away from an occupation rendered irksome and distasteful by the conditions imposed, and, unfortunately in many cases, resulting in too early and improvident marriage, and in some cases resulting in immorality of life.



## METROPOLITAN REPORTS.

During the week ending May the 10th, 1884, several members of the Shop Hours Labour League made observations, in order to corroborate generally the statements given in evidence as to the hours of closing in a few leading thoroughfares of the Metropolis. The following are roughly the results. The numbers include all trades, excepting public and refreshment houses. Only one or two leading thoroughfares in each district mentioned were taken.

ISLINGTON.—Out of 250 shops counted on Friday, 200 were open at 9.30 P.M.

STOKE-NEWINGTON.—Out of 300 shops counted, 225 were open at 10 o'clock on Friday.

WHITECHAPEL.—Out of 600 shops counted on Friday, the 9th of May, 475 were open at 10.15 P.M.

HACKNEY.—Out of 200 shops counted on Wednesday, 150 were open at 9.30 P.M.

POPLAR.—Out of 150 shops counted, 120 were open on Friday at 10 P.M.

EDGEWARE ROAD.—Out of 150 shops counted on Wednesday night, 40 were open at 9.30, and 50 at 10 P.M.

HAMMERSMITH.—Out of 250 shops counted, 200 were open at 9.30 P.M., 50 open at 10 P.M.

BROMPTON.—Out of 200 shops counted on Wednesday night, 150 were open at 9.15 P.M.

KENTISH TOWN.—Out of 175 shops counted, 120 were open at 9.30, and 50 at 9.45 P.M.

BATTERSEA.—Out of 200 shops, 140 were open at 10 P.M. on Friday night.

LAMBETH.—Out of 450 shops, 350 were open at 10 P.M. on Friday night.



THE BORO', SOUTHWARK.—Out of 178 shops counted on Wednesday, 125 were open at 9.30, and 50 at 10 P.M.

BERMONDSEY.—Out of 400 shops counted on Wednesday night, 320 were open at 10 P.M.

Male and female assistants are employed more or less in all the above shops, and on Saturdays the majority do not leave work before 12 P.M. The actual working hours are thus from sixteen to seventeen on one day, and from thirteen to fourteen on five days of the week, as the assistants begin work between half-past seven and half-past eight in the morning. The numbers given are infinitesimal compared with the whole, and are merely adduced as a sample of thousands more.

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### PROVINCIAL REPORTS.

BARNET (NEW).—Respecting the early closing movement, my opinion is that it will never become general until it is made compulsory.

BIRMINGHAM.—We should be very glad if some means could be devised for a general closing of shops at a uniform time, the early closing system being adopted by very few in this district. The overwork is simply scandalous in the majority of shops.

BRADFORD.—We should like to have the same hours as the mill hands. They have some time to themselves, but we are always at work.

BRIGHTON.—The hours of business are very nearly as bad as in London. Some close early, but the majority are slaves to the late shoppers.

BRISTOL.—The present hours are excessively long, and a new system might be introduced by which a number of hands may be allowed to leave at 5 P.M. once a week, to be able to take out-door exercise. After the present hours, and after clearing away, they are too tired to embrace walking exercise.

CANTERBURY.—The hours of business might be very much curtailed, both to the advantage of the employer and employed.

CARLISLE.—Seventy-five to eighty hours a week is too long for anyone, and it is time there was a reform.



CASTLEFORD.—Eight months ago the drapers adopted the five o'clock Thursday closing, which has thus far worked fairly well. This reduces our hours of business to  $72\frac{1}{2}$  per week. No other trade has as yet joined the movement. We ought to have an extension of the Factory Act.

CHESTER.—The hours here are about eighty a week.

DARLINGTON.—The hours in the small shops are far too long. The business could be done in much less time, and the assistants would get the advantage.

DERBY.—Shop hours here are about eighty a week. We believe legislation is the only remedy.

DEWSBURY.—It is very desirable that our business hours should be curtailed and more leisure time be given to our apprentices and assistants. We have struggled hard in the town to get, during the winter months, two nights' early closing each week in some of the trades. Except for a single tradesman in two or three of the trades that keep open, they would have closed also. How long is a single tradesman to rule a trade in this way! It only shows the great necessity of compulsory legislation in the matter. Hours of business are much too long, and might with advantage be lessened by closing earlier.

DONCASTER.—A weekly half-holiday (closing on Thursdays at 2 P.M.) has been adopted, and is found to work well, the grocers being the only trade in the town holding out, one firm being the cause of this trade not uniting in the general holiday.

FAKENHAM.—We close at eight in the summer and seven in the winter, but you will require an Act of Parliament to make it general, on account of the different classes of trade. All the small shops keep open disgracefully long.

FAVERSHAM.—In our town we find a great difficulty in closing at any particular time, owing to the many traders not being able to agree. I wish I could speak better of it. There is one thing, we do all always manage to close at five o'clock during the summer on Thursdays.

HOUNSLOW.—The hours of business here are very long, viz., from 7.30 A.M. to 9 P.M., and no half-holiday—one draper alone, out of about ten, opposing the wishes of all the others for eight o'clock closing on three days, and five o'clock on one day a-week. State interference, if practicable, is very desirable.

HUDDERSFIELD.—We work here just twenty-five hours longer every week than the factory hands, without any profit to employers or assistants.



ILKLEY.—This neighbourhood is very backward in regard to early closing. A half-day closing is unknown, and only three whole days in the year are recognized holidays—December 25th and 26th and Good Friday.

KIRBY STEPHEN.—We are still working long hours, with no immediate prospect of shortening them. Result : heavy gas bills, and conviction that same trade might be done in much less time.

LEAMINGTON.—The hours of business in the retail trade generally are much too long. The Thursday early closing has been tried here, and, after a few months, resulted in a failure. A few of the employers will not agree to a seven o'clock closing, consequently, with the exception of one or two of the houses who do a good-class trade, the assistants have little or no time for recreation. Why should this be? A curtailment of the hours of labour would result in the advantage of employers and employed alike.

LEEDS.—We are as badly off here as they are anywhere. We work eighty hours a week, and some far more.

LEICESTER.—We cannot induce everybody to close early, and so the old system is kept up, and it seems to me we shall always be slaves. We are in the shop over eighty hours a week.

LIVERPOOL.—An important meeting has been held during the season, under the most favourable auspices, in favour of earlier closing of all retail businesses, and a very decided and generally expressed opinion is that nothing short of an Act of Parliament will meet the difficulty. It is pleasing to note that many of our leading tradesmen lend their influence to such a course. Shop work is little short of slavery as things are.

LUTON.—Efforts should be made to induce the public to shop earlier on Saturday nights. The hours are very long.

MANCHESTER.—We consider the hours in the drapery trade sadly too long, and should be glad if early closing could be made compulsory. Nearly all the retail shops have terribly long hours.

MIDDLESBRO'.—The hours are from seventy-five to eighty a week—far longer than necessary. The Factory Act should be extended to shops to give a regular weekly holiday.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE.—The business hours in retail shops have been influentially taken up, our worthy bishop placing himself in the van on this question. My opinion is, and has been, that the object to aim at is the education of the public, and principals are, for the most part, at one with the assistants in regard to the desira-



bility of shorter hours ; and even a weekly half-holiday. But at the threshold of the question is the other vital question of moving the public at large. It is high time our hours were as reasonable as in factories and workshops.

NORTH SHIELDS.—The hours of business might easily be curtailed, but small drapers will not close before eight and nine on five days of the week, and on Saturday it is close upon Sunday morning before their goods are taken in from outside the shop door. The large drapers close about seven (which means half-past seven) all days except Saturday, when they close about ten or a little after. They would willingly close at six o'clock, and nine on Saturdays, if smaller tradesmen would do the same.

NORWICH.—We think the hours are much too long and ought to be reduced, as the overwork kills the assistants.

NORWOOD (LOWER).—The hours of business might be considerably curtailed without loss to any one. Nine o'clock is the usual closing time here, with ten and eleven on Saturdays.

NORTHAMPTON.—Shop hours are the same here as everywhere else, too long. Master and man are deprived of leisure.

NOTTINGHAM.—Many drapers close their establishments at one o'clock on Thursdays. The public feeling is much in favour of the movement, and the great boon is much appreciated by masters and assistants. The opposition to the movement comes from the Market Place drapers, some doing the high-class trade. The shops in other trades are very late.

RAMSGATE.—As to the hours of business, they are much too long. It is a pity that tradesmen will not see that it would be as much to their advantage to close earlier, as it would be to their assistants.

RAWTENSTALL.—Should be very glad if shops had a law like the mills, only to be open a certain number of hours per week. Some shops here are open from half-past seven to ten o'clock daily, except Saturday, which is till twelve o'clock.

READING.—I have for the past five months adopted the half-holiday, viz., closing at three o'clock on Thursday. So far, I have lost none of my customers, except casual trade I may have lost ; however, I can find no falling off in my returns. In a ready money trade like mine, I with the assistants profit by the rest it affords, or taking a tour into the country. I am the only one in Reading goes in for the same. The hours generally are far too long.

RED HILL.—The hours of business here are too long. We might just as well close at 7 P.M. as 8 P.M. ; and 9 P.M. on Saturdays, instead



of 10 to half-past 10 P.M., as the Saturday night trade is not what it used to be ; and I fancy from what my friends in the trade say, elsewhere it is the same.

REDDITCH.—As regards the hours of closing, I for one should be glad to see a law that would compel all tradesmen to close at a certain hour, viz., seven o'clock all the year round except Saturdays, and then I should consider nine o'clock a very reasonable hour, and one that would prove beneficial to master and servants, or I should like to see the Factory Acts applied to shops.

RICHMOND (SURREY).—Early closing, I am afraid, will never become very general unless it is made compulsory, as so many of the large firms close on the Saturday ; and as that is the best day in the whole week for middle and lower class trades, it puts it beyond question altogether that they will ever agree to close on that day.

ROCHDALE.—The hours are far too long, and we don't know how to shorten them.

SLEAFORD.—In almost all towns shops might be closed at 7 P.M. There is a certain class of indolent people who come at the last moment.

STOCKTON.—It seems as if we shall never get shorter hours. Everybody is better off than shopkeepers and assistants.

STAFFORD.—The hours of business in this town might be curtailed, with great benefit to both employers and employed.

STAINES.—We consider that the late hours of keeping shops open in the winter is a decided loss ; the gas expenses are not paid, and an hour earlier closing in the earlier days of the week would be a benefit. The assistants in the trade should combine and influence public opinion.

STOURPORT.—Referring to the hours of business, we should like to see early closing more unanimous.

SOUTHAMPTON.—We are very badly off here as to early closing. A few shut up early, but the bulk of the assistants work about eighty hours a week.

SUNDERLAND.—An effort has been made to shorten the hours of labour in the drapery trade of this town by closing all the principal places of business (except one or two houses) at 6 P.M. during the month of January, but as these firms were determined to have the advantage of the others by an hour or more every evening it was decided on the first of February to return to the old hour of closing, and now the hours are much longer than necessary, causing employers and assistants to suffer in health.



TAUNTON.—The hours of closing might be considerably shortened, and with advantage to both employers and employed. Why not close at six o'clock for six months and seven o'clock the summer months? Nothing will give a regular holiday and shorten the hours but an Act of Parliament.

TEWKESBURY.—Hours of business : Shops close at 7 P.M., with the exception of three summer months — May, June, and July, when the time is extended to 8 P.M. ; Thursdays, 5 P.M. ; Saturday, 9 to 10 P.M. This has been found to work well for all parties for a number of years, though there is a disposition on the part of some to make the closing earlier on the Thursday.

TORQUAY.—The curtailment of business hours is most desirable for all parties, especially in Torquay, where so little unanimity of opinion prevails on the subject. The hours are too long, and the business could be done in much less time.

TRURO.—We think the number of hours during which retail drapers' shops should be open to customers should in no case exceed twelve hours on one day, or an average of ten hours during the six days.

WANTAGE.—We close in this town at eight o'clock four nights in the week, Friday nine, and ten Saturday, when, with only one exception, all would agree to close one hour earlier all the week ; just in the winter months the extra hour we keep open does not at all times pay for gas we burn. But we can't get unanimity.

WHITBY.—Retail drapers' hours need reform. The hours are far too long. I should suggest, as a national rule, the hours should be nine to seven, and during the dark winter months nine to six. The public would have plenty of time to shop.

WHITEHAVEN.—As regards early closing we have tried all hours, and they are far too long, but what can we do?

YORK.—We have tried to shorten the hours, but can't get them less than seventy-five to eighty a week.

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## WALES.

CARDIFF.—Our hours of closing are the same now as twenty years ago, and are likely to remain the same for another twenty years unless Parliament legislates us into better things. Some greedy Jew or grasping Gentile will always upset any arrangement for shorter hours.



# SHOP HOURS LABOUR LEAGUE

## EARLY CLOSING MOVEMENT.

*Patrons, Patronesses, and Sympathisers with the Objects  
of the League.*

His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury.	Lady Claude Hamilton.
Their Graces the Duke and Duchess of Sutherland.	Lord Claude Hamilton.
Earl Stanhope, K.G.	Lady Algernon Borthwick.
Marquess of Hamilton, M.P.	Lady John Manners.
Earl of Wharncliffe, K.G.	The Lady Brabazon.
Earl of Yarborough.	The Countess Dowager of Win- chelsea and Notts.
Earl and Countess of Kingstone.	Lady Frances Warburton.
Earl of Aberdeen, K.T.	Mrs Sutherst.
Earl of Breadalbane, K.T.	Mrs H. Strange-Butson.
Earl of Dalhousie, K.T.	Rt. Hon. Henry Fawcett, P.C., M.P.
Earl of Carnarvon, K.G.	The Right Hon. Wm. H. Smith, P.C., M.P.
Earl of Ravensworth.	Fdck. T. Mappin, Esq., M.P.
The Right Hon. Earl of Dysart.	Hon. Sydney Buxton, M.P.
His Eminence Cardinal Manning.	Wm. St. Aubyn, Esq., M.P.
The Right Hon. Lord Ardilaun.	James Bryce, Esq., M.P.
The Lord Brabazon.	J. J. Leeman, Esq., M.P.
Right Hon. Lord John Manners, M.P., P.C.	Samuel Smith, Esq., M.P.
The Baron de Ville.	Charles Waring, Esq., M.P.
Lord Randolph Churchill, M.P.	Jas. Howard, Esq., M.P.
Lord George Hamilton, M.P.	Theodore Fry, Esq., M.P.
The Bishops of Durham, Oxford, Manchester, Winchester, Liver- pool, Carlisle, and Newcastle.	Arthur Cohen, Esq., Q.C., M.P.
Lord Claude J. Hamilton, M.P.	Jas. Thorrold Rogers, Esq., M.P.
Sir John Lubbock, Bart., M.P.	Hon. G. H. Leigh, M.P.
Sir George Elliott, Bart., M.P.	Hon. W. Finch Hatton, M.P.
Sir Alfred Trevelyan, Bart., M.P.	Mr Sheriff Clarence Smith, J.P.
Sir Algernon Borthwick, Knt.	Canons Farrar, Duckworth, Lid- don, Shuttleworth, Barker, and Wilberforce.
Sir Henry Bessemer, Bt., F.R.S.	Captain Lewis.



O. B. V. Morgan, Esq.	Horace Brooks Marshall, Esq., C.C.
Quintin Hogg, Esq., J.P.	Rev. W. H. Hawkins, M.A.
Messrs Thos. Wallis & Co. (late Meekings).	Edwin Jones, Esq., J.P.
Messrs Wm. Whiteley & Co.	J. R. Roberts, Esq.
Messrs John Barker & Co.	Edwin Hughes, Esq.
H. J. Frith, Esq.	Messrs Dawson Bros. & Co.
Messrs Crisp & Sons.	Josh. Alderson & Co.,
Messrs Arding & Hobbs.	A. D. Laurie, Geo. Elliott, W.
Messrs Jones & Higgins.	P. Eversley, and H. H.
Messrs Debenham & Freebody.	Richardson, Esqs.
Edw. Ryder Cooke, Esq.	Rev. S. G. Scott, M.A.
Messrs Marshall & Snellgrove.	Rev. Charles Garrett.
Messrs Wickham & Co.	Alex. M'Arthur, Esq., M.P.
Messrs Maples & Co.	Major Bevington, J.P.
Messrs Oxenham & Co.	Messrs Recketts, Sons & Co.
Messrs Boardman & Sons.	Messrs Morgan & Scott.
Messrs Chapman & Co.	Messrs Cross & Blackwell.
Messrs Nunn & Sons.	

*President.*

T. SUTHERST, Esq.

*Vice-President.*

Lord RANDOLPH CHURCHILL, M.P.

*Secretary.*Mr MORLEY ALDERSON, 71 and 72 Imperial Buildings, Ludgate  
Circus, London, E.C.*Treasurer.*

JAMES ARNALL, Esq., 67 and 69 Holloway Road, N.

*Bankers.*

THE LONDON AND SOUTH-WESTERN BANK, LIMITED.

*Auditors.*

J. C. DONALDSON, Esq., Vestryman, &amp;c., Battersea.

F. A. TAYLOR, Esq. (Messrs Taylor & Sons),  
89 and 91 Lambeth Walk, S.E.

Messrs KAIN BROWN &amp; Co., 69 Chancery Lane, W.C.



## SHOP HOURS LABOUR LEAGUE EARLY CLOSING MOVEMENT.

### OBJECTS.

1. To guard the commercial, social, and political interest of Shopkeepers and their Assistants.
2. To rescue all those who are occupied in shops and similar places from the hardship and oppression of being obliged to work an unreasonable number of hours.
3. To watch over the health, comfort, and general interests of Female Assistants and Apprentices.
4. To institute an enquiry into every case of hardship brought to the notice of the League, and which involves the health and comfort of those whom the League is formed to protect, and to make such representations thereon to the parties concerned as those who make the enquiry recommend.
5. To procure for all Assistants a general weekly half-holiday.
6. To promote the health and happiness of Assistants by securing proper sanitary arrangements, and by encouraging healthy physical exercises, as well as the cultivation of the mind.

### MEANS TO ATTAIN THE ABOVE OBJECTS.

1. By laying before the public at large the grievances which the League seeks to redress, and, by using all the arts and means of persuasion (through the medium of the press, public meetings, and otherwise), and thereby to influence public opinion in order to engage sympathy and support.
2. By forming a powerful organisation throughout the country, composed of Shopkeepers' Assistants (male and female), and all who sympathise with the objects of the League.
3. To petition the House of Commons to appoint a Committee to enquire into the grievances of which the League complains, and to obtain an Act of Parliament to effectually reduce the hours of labour in shops and similar places, within reasonable limits, as well as to ameliorate the present lamentable condition of the great majority of Female Assistants.



HIS GRACE THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY writing from Lambeth Palace on June 9, 1883, to Morley Alderson, Secretary, says—"I have given very careful consideration to the papers you were good enough to lay before me with reference to the Shop Hours Labour League.

"I have also been in communication with some of those who publicly support the League, and I have made enquiry from them upon the whole question.

"I am led to understand that, although under present circumstances, it is thought necessary that meetings in support of the movement should be held on Sundays, this is not done with any secularizing or anti-religious view, but that the meetings in question (*a*) are opened with prayer; (*b*) are not held during the ordinary hours of Divine service; (*c*) are expressly stated to take place on Sunday as a temporary expedient, rendered necessary by the fact that until the objects of the League are attained, no other day is available.

"In the belief that the aim of the Society is a good one, and that its agency will not be used for any merely political, still less for any secularizing object, I am willing, in accordance with your request, to become one of the patrons."

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CARDINAL MANNING, in speaking at a meeting of the Shop Hours League, said he had great pleasure in attending the meeting, and in seconding the resolution just proposed. The mover had so fully and so completely proved his case that he (the speaker) felt he should be rather weakening the force of the argument if he attempted to go over the same ground. However, he would say that he entirely accepted and most heartily agreed in the object of this association. He was perfectly convinced that Mr Sutherst was right in saying that what they aimed at would never be accomplished without the intervention of the Legislature. He was, moreover, convinced that there would be found two classes arguing against them with great plausibility, and that both of them were fallacious in their arguments. First of these classes were the political economist; and, in the second place, was the hardly sincere body of objectors who said they did not want legislation, but persuasion, to accomplish the purposes of the League. To dismiss the latter, he could only say that he had had experience of this kind of objection for the last twenty years in regard to another subject—that of temperance. Having glanced at "temperance" legislation during that period, as demonstrating the worth of "persuasion" as compared with legislative action, his Eminence went on to endorse the opinion of the mover of the resolution, who had said that, to remedy the evils complained of, they must apply to the Legislature for an Act. As far as he could see, that was the



wise and proper thing to do ; and he believed that the matter, brought wisely, temperately, and moderately before the Legislature, the Act would be secured them. He expected that for some time, they would be scouted and routed ; but that must not discourage them. The other objectors—the political economists—told them that, in matters of labour and capital and trade, of time consumed, and so on, there must be freedom of contract, and that legislation must not interfere in such matters. Nowadays they were told that to interfere herein was but the first efforts of Socialism, and men were loud in declaring that we were coming to Communism and what not ? He (the Cardinal) disbelieved in the hobgoblins that had been in the past as now, set before the people, solely to terrify. He was old enough to have a good many memories. One of the first speeches he ever made in his life was for free trade in wool, and he never abandoned the principles of political economy then laid down—principles which to him seemed to be those of common sense. Though old, he could not say that he remembered Pitt or Fox ; but the other day he was reading quotations from them. While a dispute existed, in which the stocking weavers of Nottingham were interested, Pitt said, Parliament being called upon to intervene : “ If Parliament be not sitting, Parliament must be called together for the purpose of finding a remedy for the evil ; and let no man tell me that Parliament cannot do it, for Parliament is competent to redress the evils of all that suffer.” His Eminence next proceeded to take a survey of the legislation since 1834 in regard to labour and the hours devoted to it, connecting with the legislation relating thereto the name of the Earl of Shaftesbury, which evoked repeated applause from the audience. In conclusion, his Eminence remarked that he was looking with much anxiety at the changes that were going on in our country. There was a time when the master and the man lived on the estate, and differently to what they did now. There was a time when patriarchal care, feeling of human sympathy, of human happiness, and of human service prevailed. There had, nowadays, grown up a new world—a world of money, of commerce, of manufacture, and a relationship between master and man that, unlike that of the time past, was not one of sympathy, or benevolence, or patriarchal care, but a relationship of so many shillings per week, paid on the Friday or Saturday. It would be well if this relationship, even in a degree of confidence, affection, benevolence, and service, could be restored.

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REV. C. H. SPURGEON, writing on the Early Closing Movement, says—“ I greatly sympathise with all reasonable attempts to shorten the hours of shop-keeping. As a Christian, I sympathise with many of my brethren who find no time for public services,



philanthropic engagements, or even for private reading, by reason of the grinding tyranny which demands so many hours of the day. As a man, I grieve for those who are made slaves by the exactions of excessive toil, and hindered in their aspirations for better things by sheer weariness of body and soul. Even on the lowest ground of feeling for physical strain and suffering, I cannot but pity those whose health is undermined by close confinement during so much of the day. In many cases there is no need for the cruelly long hours, and the public should see to it that they are not continued. I know that specially early closing on one evening in the week is a boon which seems to alter the whole face of things, and gives the worker something to cheer him in his weekly labours. I wish it might become the universal custom to close at five on Wednesday or Thursday. Few movements would be more beneficial. I wish it the utmost success."

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LORD SHAFTESBURY says—"It is my firm belief, that if the Early Closing Movement can be carried to its full issue, it will go further to promote the social happiness of tens of thousands of families than almost any other movement with which I am acquainted."

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EARL STANHOPE, K.G., strongly sympathises with the League, and trusts that public opinion would lead to earlier closing of shops and warehouses in certain districts of our large towns.

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LORD CLAUD HAMILTON, at a Shop Hours League meeting, said we are met to endeavour to drag thousands of their fellow men and women out of the condition of degradation in which they were through no fault of theirs, and to do that by legislation. Young shop assistants were working from fourteen to seventeen hours a day, and standing all the time. The female constitution was never intended to sustain such a continuous round of hard labour. It was a case in which they must go to Parliament for a social remedy, because he was afraid that without legislative interference they could not get unanimity on the subject. No doubt there would be great difficulty in incorporating in an Act of Parliament all the objects they had in view; or the fact was, they must have compulsory legislation which Parliament had wisely and humanely applied to factories, mines, &c. He heartily wished the League success.



LORD BRABAZON, speaking at a meeting held in the Royal Albert Hall, said they knew how deeply he regretted the necessity under which they were of coming together on the Lord's Day. He should not be present if he did not feel it was a necessity, and they were told in the holiest of books that they might perform good works on that day. They all knew what were the objects of this League—to obtain reasonable hours of labour and a weekly half-holiday by legislation. The importance of this question could hardly be over-estimated when they considered that it affected in the metropolis alone 100,000 men. The shop assistants of this country were at present employed from 80 to 90 hours per week, from 13 to 15 hours a day, and many were employed still longer, even extending to 18 hours out of the 24. (Shame.) To take one particular class, there were the young women who were employed at bars, and he found from a paper published by the League that these young women were frequently employed at work from seven A.M. to ten P.M. on one day, and on the next day from seven A.M. to one A.M. on the following day. He for one was pleased to see that these social questions were coming to the front. They would be glad to hear that this League was increasing in numbers and strength. It had spread from the metropolis into the country. It might be asked why the League went in for legislation, and would not moral persuasion do as well? The answer to that was, that moral persuasion had been tried for many years. Moral persuasion had failed because there would always be a selfish minority who would consider their own interests irrespective of anyone else, and who held the key of the position. The only way they could get what they desired was through the votes of the people. He hoped that next session there would be another important bill carried, which was said to interfere with the liberty of the subject, and that was the bill prepared by Mr Sutherst, and if they believed that legislation was necessary he appealed to them to assist the League.

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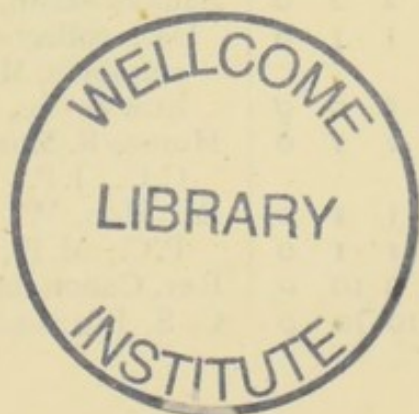
THE EARL OF ABERDEEN says—"All the information which I have as yet gained tends to strengthen an impression that a good case has been made out in favour of a Parliamentary inquiry as to whether there ought not to be some legislative control with reference to the hours during which persons are employed in shops."

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The late G. THOMPSON, Esq., M.P. for Tower Hamlets, when speaking at Cheltenham upon late shopping made the following remarks :—"I have travelled over many thousand miles



of the earth and sea of the globe. I have gone through many countries and seen the condition of many millions—I may say hundreds of millions—of the human race, I have gone through countries where despotism is untrammelled. I have seen superstition in its most awful and horrid, and uneradicated forms. I have seen various forms of bad government and various states of society. I have mingled with the natives, and have as far as possible made myself acquainted with their feelings; and I am bound to say that from the time I left my native land until, in the mercy of God, I returned to it again, I have seen no class of men doomed to anything like the drudgery and toil endured by the well-dressed, respectable, and meritorious assistants of our own country.”





# SHOP HOURS LABOUR LEAGUE.

## List of Donations from Patrons, Patronesses, Honorary Members, &c.,

*From November 29, 1882, to May 12, 1884.*

The Earl of Dysart, . . . . .	£5	0	0	Messrs Marshall & Snell-			
Earl of Stanhope, K.G., . . . . .	5	0	0	grove's collection at			
Earl of Yarborough, . . . . .	5	0	0	meeting, . . . . .	10	10	0
Earl of Aberdeen, . . . . .	2	2	0	Quintin Hogg, Esq., J.P.,	10	0	0
Earl of Ravensworth, . . . . .	2	2	0	Collection at Messrs Deb-			
Earl of Wharncliffe, . . . . .	1	0	0	enham & Freebody's, . . . . .	10	0	0
Earl of Breadalbane, . . . . .	1	0	0	Do., collected amongst			
Earl of Dalhousie, . . . . .	1	0	0	employés, Messrs Jones			
The Lord Brabazon, . . . . .	35	0	0	& Higgins, . . . . .	5	14	0
The Lady Brabazon, . . . . .	1	0	0	Messrs Ricketts & Sons,	7	7	0
Lord Ardilaun, . . . . .	5	0	0	Fdk. J. Mappin, Esq.,			
Lord Randolph Churchill,				M.P., . . . . .	5	0	0
M.P., . . . . .	1	0	0	O. B. V. Morgan, Esq.,			
Lord Claude Hamilton, . . . . .	1	1	0	J.P., Battersea, . . . . .	5	0	0
Lady Claude Hamilton, . . . . .	1	1	0	Chas. Waring, Esq., M.P.,	5	0	0
De Ville, the Baron of, . . . . .	1	1	0	Employés of J. R. Roberts,			
The Countess Dowager				Esq., . . . . .	3	15	0
of Winchelsea and Not-				J. R. Roberts, Esq., . . . . .	3	3	0
tingham, . . . . .	2	2	0	Arthur Cohen, Q.C., M.P.,	3	3	0
His Eminence Cardinal				Frank Debenham, Esq.,			
Manning, . . . . .	7	2	0	Messrs Debenham &			
The Lord Bishop of Durham,	2	2	0	Freebody, . . . . .	3	3	0
Bishop of Winchester, . . . . .	2	2	0	Samuel Smith, Esq., M.P.,	3	1	0
Bishop of Newcastle, . . . . .	1	1	0	Do., collected amongst			
Sir John Lubbock, Bart.,				employés, Messrs Oxen-			
M.P., . . . . .	5	0	0	ham & Co., . . . . .	1	11	6
Sir A. E. Trevellyan, Bt.,	1	1	0	Horace B. Marshall, Esq.,			
Sir George Elliott, Bt.,				C.C., J.P., . . . . .	2	2	0
M.P., . . . . .	1	1	0	Rt. Hon. W. H. Smith,			
Sir Algernon Borthwick, . . . . .	1	1	0	P.C., M.P., . . . . .	2	2	0
Sir Henry Bessemer, . . . . .	0	10	0	Rev. Canon Barker, M.A.,	2	2	0
Messrs Crosse & Blackwell,	10	10	0	C. S. Boardman, . . . . .	2	2	







Submitted and approved at their Great Annual Meeting, held in the Royal Albert Hall, December 9th, 1883.  
The Lord BRABAZON in the Chair.

President—T. SUTHERST, Esq.  
Vice-President—Lord RANDOLPH CHURCHILL, M.P.  
Receipts and Expenditure from the 25th November, 1882, to December 8th, 1883.

RECEIPTS.		PAYMENTS.	
Balance brought forward from last year	£2 18 8½	Expended for Printing during the year	£102 12 8
Amount received from Members for Annual Subscriptions	106 16 9	Office Expenses, including weekly allowance for Travelling Expenses, and honorarium to Mr Alderson, the Secretary	59 0 0
Amount of Subscriptions and Donations received during the past year, as per list herewith	86 11 0	Bill Posting and delivery of Bills, Circulars, &c.	14 10 8
Collections at various Public Meetings, as per list herewith	127 6 11	Postage, Stationery, &c.	48 3 7
Amount owing from the League to the Secretary, Mr Alderson, being cash overpaid by him on behalf of the League	20 11 6	Bank Charges	1 19 10
Amounts received, being subscriptions towards the necessary Expenses in connection with the forthcoming Meeting at the Royal Albert Hall, London, and the Stewards' Lunch	8 3 9	Collector's Salary, Commission and Travelling Expenses	33 2 7½
Amount overpaid by Treasurer, Jas. Arnall, Jun., Esq., and at his request to be taken as a further Subscription to the League	2 7 3	Hire of Halls, &c., for Public Meetings, and Fees to Bands and Organist, and Expenses of Attendants and Police, as per list herewith	68 2 3
		Expenses of Luncheon and Stewards for Albert Hall and other Meetings	13 1 7
		Cost of Agreement for Hire of Offices, Office Furniture, Collecting Boxes and Sundry Small Payments	4 3 0
		Balance, being amount standing to the Credit of the League at the London and South Western Bank, Limited, at date	9 19 8
	<u>£354 15 10½</u>		<u>£354 15 10½</u>

ASSETS.		LIABILITIES.	
Balance at Bank.	£9 19 8	Amount due to Mr Webber for Printing	£5 7 0
Balance carried forward	17 18 10	Two weeks' Salary due to Collector	2 0 0
		Amount due to Secretary, being allowance for Office Expenses and Cash paid by him on behalf of the League	20 11 6
	<u>£27 18 6</u>		<u>£27 18 6</u>

EXTRACT FROM AUDITORS' REPORT.  
Messrs KAIN, BROWN, & Co., 69 Chancery Lane, W.C.,  
December 8th, 1883.

DEAR SIR,—We have much pleasure in sending you the Balance Sheet of your Association, by which you will find that your Liabilities exceed your Assets by £17, 18s. 10d. *We are glad to find the Expenditure has been kept down.* We consider the business of the League has been carried on at the *lowest possible expense*, and that very great credit is due to the Treasurer and yourself.—Yours faithfully,  
(Signed) KAIN, BROWN, & Co.,  
Law and General Chartered Accountants, Auditors' Costs Draftsmen.  
The Secretary, Shop Hours Labour League,  
71 and 72 Imperial Buildings, Ludgate Circus, E.C.

Balance brought forward, being the amount of the Liabilities of the League at date . . . . . £17 18 10

(Signed) KAIN, BROWN, & CO.,  
Accountants, &c.,  
69 Chancery Lane, } Hon. Auditors.  
(Signed) C. DONALDSON.



Cut this out and send to the Secretary.

“Who would be free himself must strike the blow.”

## SHOP HOURS LABOUR LEAGUE.

PATRONS AND SYMPATHISERS WITH THE OBJECTS OF THE LEAGUE.

His Grace the ARCHBISHOP of CANTERBURY, Their Graces the DUKE and DUCHESS of SUTHERLAND, The Right Hon. the Earls of Shaftesbury, K.G., Aberdeen, Dalhousie, Stanhope, Carnarvon, the Bishops of Durham, Oxford, Manchester, and Carlisle, Cardinal Manning, &c.

*President*—T. Sutherst, Esq.

*Vice-President*—Lord Randolph Churchill, M.P.

*Treasurer*—Jas. Arnall, jun., Esq.

*Bankers*—London and South Western Bank, Limited.

*Hon. Auditors*—Messrs Kain, Brown, Donaldson, and Taylor.

Attend to your Health and Comfort, and Shorten the Hours of Labour in Shops by Legislation.

*Fill in your Name and Address at once, if you wish to help this Great Movement.*

I wish to become a Member of the SHOP HOURS LABOUR LEAGUE.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

The Subscription is ONE SHILLING a-year, or as much more as you can afford, which can be sent in stamps or Postal Order, with this Form, to the Secretary.

*The League promotes Temperance, Thrift, Prudence, and the Cultivation of the Mind.*

MORLEY ALDERSON, Sec.

SHOP HOURS LABOUR LEAGUE, 71-2 IMPERIAL BUILDINGS, LUDGATE CIRCUS, LONDON, E.C.

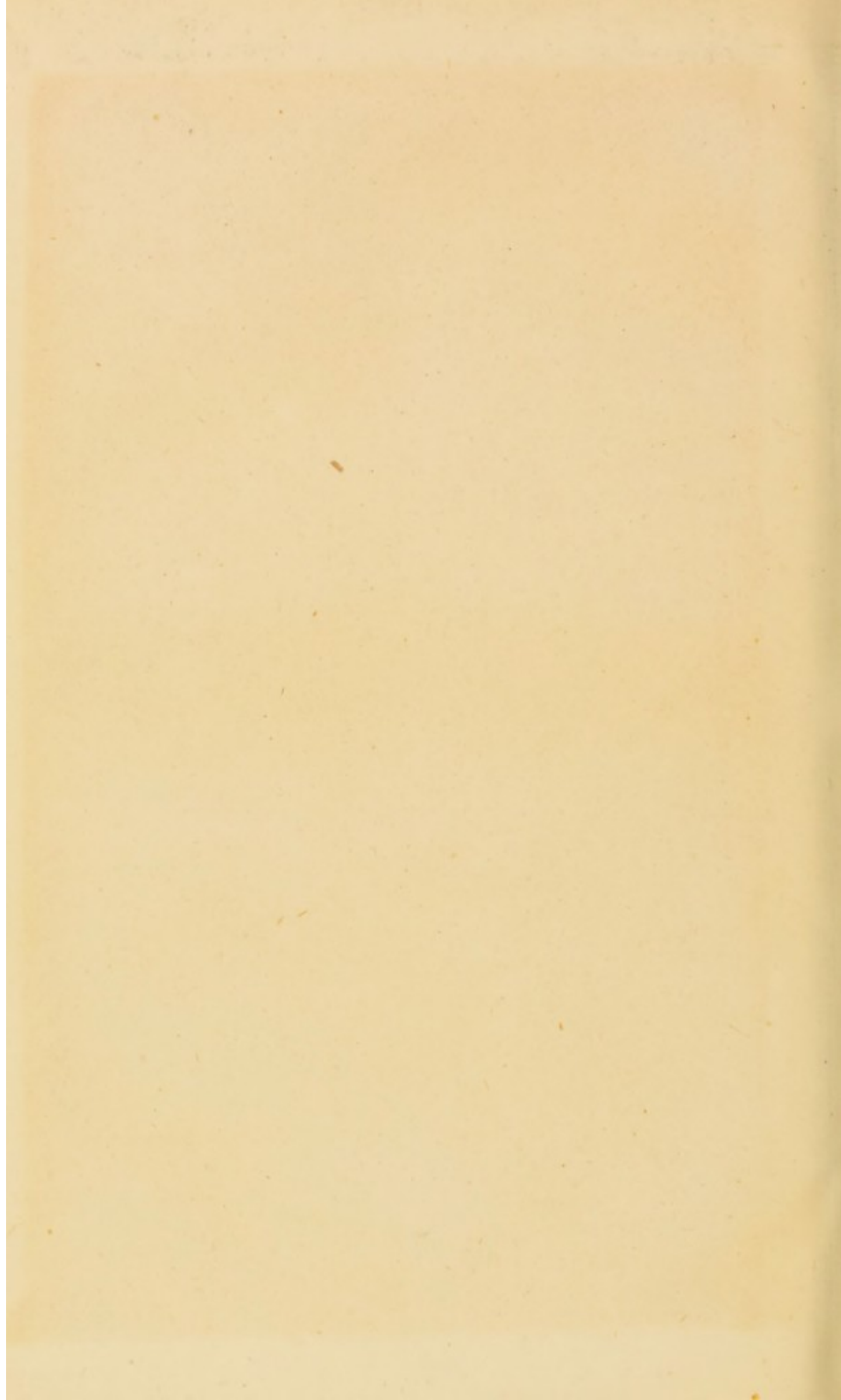




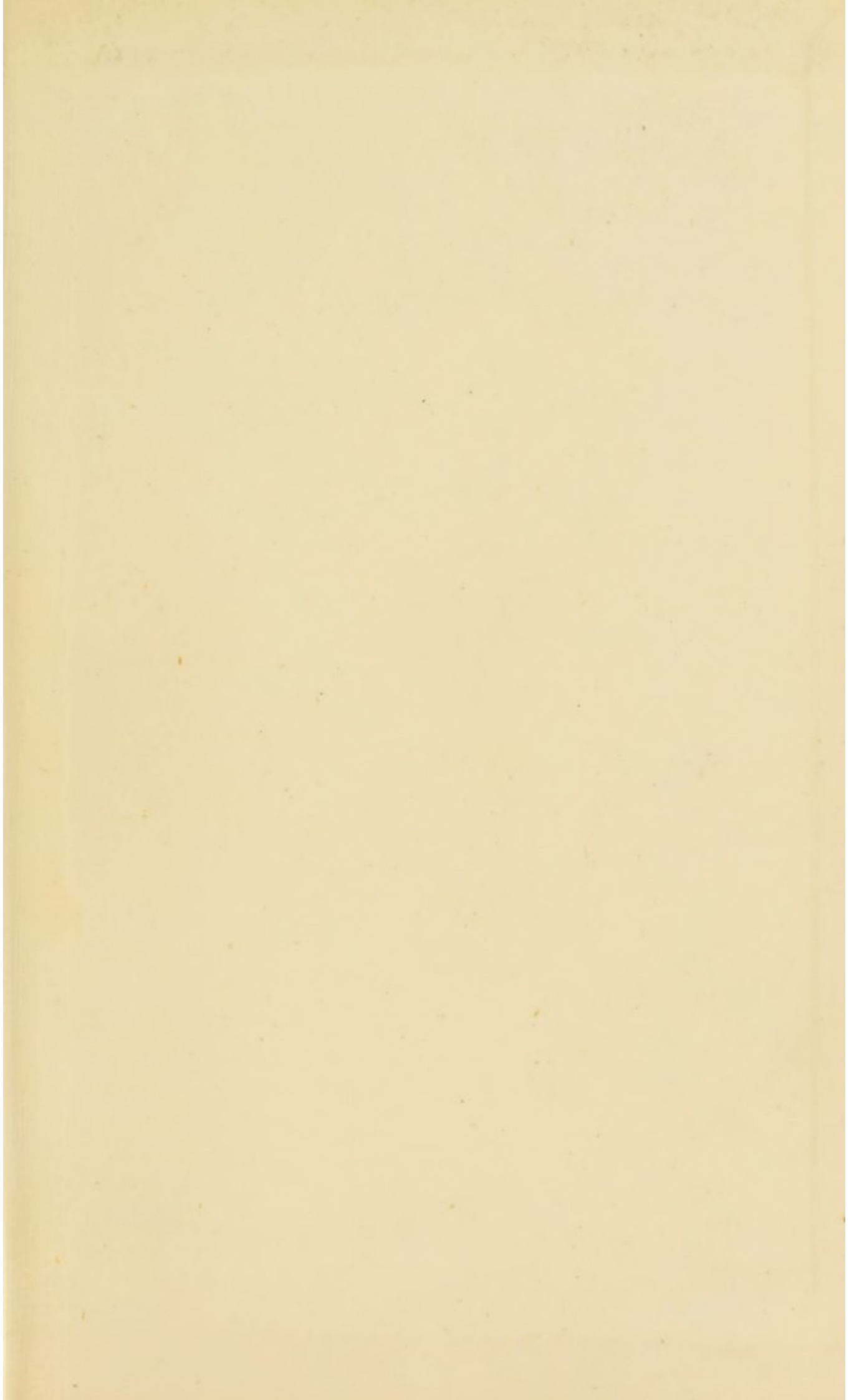














P.T.  
K&C