

factured goods, must raise his produce accordingly; and the employee in turn must pay more for both. This is the circle in which the current of trade runs, and in which—no matter how the current may for the time being be disturbed—the common level must be maintained. Thus, if the operatives in boot and shoe factories demand the nine hours' system, and it is conceded to them, boots and shoes will inevitably rise all over the country; and, if this be the case with other fabricated articles in general use, there will follow an upward tendency in every article of household consumption. The result would be just the same as if the labouring power of the country were reduced by one-tenth, creating a scarcity of labour. Every one knows that when this has been the case, high prices have ruled. The operation of trade in this respect is as simple as the action of a water course, which goes up hill or down hill according as it finds its proper level. It will be easily seen then that the working-man would gain but little pecuniarily by the change.

There is another phase of the subject, and one which, notwithstanding it has been already pretty thoroughly discussed in the press and elsewhere, it would be well to consider. This is the system of coercion—the tone of absolutism which the Labour League has thought proper to adopt. Without laughing as *Punch* did, a year or two ago, when a body of tailors on strike in London published their "ultimatum," it is impossible to regard the action of the League as other than ill-advised and foolish. When one considers the impracticability of applying any inflexible rule to all parts of the country, and to all departments of trade, the folly is at once apparent. What may be expedient in one case may be wholly inexpedient in another. Where it may be simple justice in one case, it may involve a gross injustice in another. Thus there are some trades which are peculiarly exhausting, and some which

are peculiarly unhealthy; while others, on the contrary, are not only neither of these, but are absolutely conducive to health and happiness when engaged in at the moderate rate of ten hours per day. Of the two former classes are iron-smelting, painting, stone-cutting, and glass-blowing. These are occupations the least of all to be envied, and those engaged in them are entitled to as much indulgence as possible in this respect. In opposition to these may be placed such occupations as that of a carpenter, a machinist, or a civil engineer, where the interest is so well sustained, where the proportions of physical and mental labour are so nicely balanced as to render them a pleasure rather than a burden. In cases like these there would be an injustice, not only to the employer but to the workmen themselves, in forcing them, if such a thing were possible, to work a smaller number of hours than they found expedient and profitable. In some cases again, and eminently those first above mentioned, very little risk is incurred in shortening the hours of labour, inasmuch as those branches of trade are not subject to such international competition as to be affected materially by a change of this kind; while others, on the contrary, such as the manufacturers of cottons, woollens, and leathers might suffer very sensibly from this cause. Nor does it seem that the operatives in these branches are at all oppressed by working ten hours a day. Tanning, without being peculiarly fatiguing, is notoriously a healthy occupation, while the work in cotton and woollen factories is so light as to be supplied chiefly by boys and girls. It may be said that this very fact would make it desirable to shorten the hours of labour. It may be urged that ten hours work is too great a strain on the physical endurance of one of premature years, but those who have had opportunities of observing, must have noticed that the great majority of boys and girls employed in factories go to and leave their work with just as much cheerfulness as others