

frequently quoted in questions of this kind, has put forth the probable consequences of reduction of hours in a very exhaustive article in the 'Contemporary Review' of October, 1891, in which he points out that the present very long day in many trades and occupations is a product mainly of this century, the fruit of the factory system which the industrial revolution brought in its train.

For the last sixty years, he says, we have been slowly learning the lessons that the prolongation of working hours, which was nearly eating the heart out of the labouring manhood of England, was, from the standpoint of the manufacturer's own interest, a grave pecuniary mistake.

He then goes on to give copious evidence from actual experiments, that a workman can do as good work in eight hours as in nine or ten or more; and he argues that the sources from which the compensating progress in the labourer's personal efficiency had proceeded in previous experience and are still far from being exhausted. Among the sources which he mentions are the increased energy, contentment, and intelligence of the workman, the saving of time lost through sickness, unpunctuality and the breaks for meal times.

One may ask, Sir, how it is that shortening the hours of labour does not affect productivity. It is because shorter hours tell on the vital and mental energies of the workmen, who soon discover the secret of making up for the diminution of work hours by improved arrangements of the work.

The main point in connection with any proposed further reduction of the hours of labour is the question of the probable effect of the change in the personal efficiency of the workpeople. If productivity was to be lessened by short hours, profits and wages would also be lessened; and good wages are quite as necessary to the improvement of the working class as more leisure. But then shorter hours may not in reality mean shorter product, for they may so better the quality of labour that as much is done afterwards in the short day as was done before in the long one. A French manufacturer once said to M. Guizot, one of France's most renowned historians and statesmen: 'We used to say it was the last hour of labour that gave us our profit, but we have now learned it was the last hour that ate up our profits.' This admission, it seems to me, is most significant and most conclusive.

The majority of writers on this economical subject agree that the eight hour movement ought to obtain a legal recognition of the general social interest in every labour contract, and it is generally admitted that no other power but parliament can secure an effective reduction.

It seems to me that the questions now

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under consideration, if it comes to a favourable conclusion, would be, on the part of this Liberal government, a generous as well as an inviting effort towards securing a general settlement of this most interesting and important subject; and is it not the duty of the state to set an example in this present occasion?

It is not in the scope of my remarks to go further in the direction of giving an economical demonstration of the eight hour system, but if we admit, as the available evidence and sound reasoning in political economy make it most reasonable to believe, that the eight hour day of labour has no blight to cast on the economic prosperity of the working class or of the nation at large, while it will be certain to contribute greatly to the moral and social elevation of both, then it is the task of those who stand at the head of the people as leaders, to see that the great class of toilers be protected, either by means of concessions from employers, or through the trade union agency, or by means of legislation.

We must bear in mind that human society is a moral body which has a heart as well as the individual; so says Victor Cousin. Generosity, goodness and fairness, consequently are expected to be found in every political organism.

I will now, Sir, attempt to view in a few words the question of shorter hours of labour from another aspect; that of building up the welfare of the manual labouring class by giving it time and leisure to benefit from education, making each man, as much as possible, a better, if not a competent judge of the great questions that parliament has to decide. Every man in the country is virtually called to share in the work of government. But are the men thus called upon to rule capable of understanding the task set before them? All well-thinking and experienced public men will unanimously answer that a very large number of our labouring fellow citizens are not, under present industrial conditions, capable of forming a fair, conscientious and accurate opinion on the point at issue. And where is the remedy to the evil, if not in the raising of the intellectual capacity of the electorate! An eight hours day will give more daily leisure to the bulk of voters and thousands of working men will have the opportunity of becoming competent for their duties of citizenship.

Let us not forget that the ruling power lies in the greater number who thus become the real masters of the country when the ballot day arrives, and it is necessary to educate such masters by giving them all possible opportunities of thinking of and learning the important liabilities incumbent on their supreme prerogatives. The workmen are not mere machines to be used, I could say illused, till they are completely