

will fall the severest condemnation of eternal justice,—on these victims of a heartless industrial system, or on the society that apathetically tolerates conditions which naturally lead to such results? We claim for these workers "equality of opportunity" indeed, not the opportunity to be crushed under the wheels of our industrial Juggernaut, but the opportunity to do a fair and healthful measure of work, in conformity with the plain laws of God written on our frames, and to develop the faculties which He has bestowed on them for that end.

Seeing then, the helplessness of these poor girls, and the incapacity of either themselves or their ignorant mothers, to act intelligently and firmly in their defence, there is good reason why the enlightened and influential women of Canada should recognize their responsibility, as being in some degree "the sisters keepers." The Woman's National Council has shown its sense of this responsibility in taking this matter up, and refusing to be deterred by the well-meaning but delusive argument that it should be made a "human question," and that the cause of woman's work should not be disassociated from that of men! We clearly see that the very helplessness of the girls and children promotes their oppression, to a degree not practicable in the case of men, who have votes, one great source of strength, and who also have a natural disposition to stand up for their rights, and a capacity for organization which is entirely wanting in most girls, who can be intimidated with very little trouble. Working-men, moreover, have enough to do to take care of themselves, and can hardly be expected to take care of the girls as well. It is, therefore, all the more fitting that their more fortunate sisters should take their hardships into consideration, and endeavour to lighten them. In the matter of reducing the present long working day in factories where these exist, there ought not to be much difficulty. This reform has been recommended for years. The Royal Labour Commission, in the Report already quoted, record their belief "that the ordinary working-day may be still further reduced *with advantage to workmen, and without injury or injustice to employers*, and recommend that the employment, in stores and factories of women and children for more than ten hours in one day, or more than fifty-four hours in one week be forbidden by law," as well as "that all Government contracts stipulate that the daily hours of labour under them shall not exceed nine."

All experience goes to show that the reduction of hours would involve no real loss to the employers or to the country. A system which injures any class of the community cannot, in the long run, be good for the community, in any case; but all actual experiment shows that neither wages nor the output of goods would suffer from the reduction of hours. John Rae, in his able book on "Contemporary Socialism," tells us that "experience all over the world shows that a short-hour State suffers nothing in competition with a long-hour State. When Massachusetts became a ten-hour State, her manufacturers never found themselves at any disadvantage in competing with those of the neighbouring eleven-hour States of New England. The ten hour day was its own reward. It improved the efficiency of the workpeople to a degree where, in concert with improvements in the management, due to the shortening of the day, the product of ten hours in Massachusetts was equal to the product of eleven elsewhere." This has been proved true in Canada, where the shorter hours' system has been tried, as may be easily verified, from the evidence of the Royal Commission,* and is due, no doubt, to the increased personal efficiency of the workman, relieved from the exhausting over-strain under which it is impossible for human brain and muscle to maintain a steady rate of labour. Among Canadian manufacturers who have found an increased rate of production to follow the shortening of hours, voluntarily adopted, may be men-

tioned Mr. Rosamond, M.P., whose Hosiery Mills never run more than ten and a half hours per day, Messrs Tuckett and Sons, Hamilton, and Mr. Vale of the same place, who maintain a nine-hours system as the more productive as well as the more humane. Toronto factories are, in general, moderate in their scale of hours. The Crompton Corset Factory has what we might almost call a model system;—running, from October 1st to March 1st from eight to six, with an hour's recess at noon, and during the summer half-year beginning work at 7.30, with the same hours following and the Saturday half-holiday in addition. The only thing left here to be desired, would be the closing as well as beginning in summer half an hour earlier. Of course a temporary prolongation of the working-day, at a time of special pressure, would not be subject to as serious objection as the continuous long hours; and it is obvious that under a shorter hours' system, the additional time allowed would not extend to the present extreme limits. At present the textile mills sometimes run over-time to the extent of thirteen hours a day, a continuous stretch of work which, especially for women and children, is unworthy of a civilized community. If a greater production is required, more workers and improved machinery, and not the over-straining of helpless operatives, is the proper resource.

As regards the matter of wages, if, as has been shown by experience, the same amount of work can be done in less time, there can be no fear of a reduction of pay; and in any case, large Companies, which show, by their dividends, that their profits must be at least 36 per cent., could, without stinting themselves, easily pay much better wages than their present rates. In fact, it is doubtful whether even girls would be found willing to work at lower rates, while very few men would consent to work for the year round at anything approaching the average pay of women and children at these mills, even if fitted for the work. There is little fear, then, of the latter being in any circumstance displaced by men, and even if a few more were induced to enter domestic service instead, this would, in the opinion of most people, be a change for the better. The training they would receive there is at least much more likely to fit them for the future to which they naturally look forward. It is certainly worthy of serious consideration, whether, in the face of medical opinion to the contrary, girls under sixteen should not be prohibited from working more than half a day, at work involving continuous standing for so many hours. If to such a regulation were added some kind of training-schools for household work many more would doubtless be induced to prepare themselves to become good and efficient domestics.

The evils of the Sweating System, which unfortunately prevails to some extent even in Canada, have also not been overlooked, and the Ottawa Woman's Council has already done more to bring to light flagrant instances within its own local sphere, than the Government Commissioner paid for the purpose. It is felt that the provisions of the Ontario Act should extend to the smallest places where hands are employed, for cases of hardship may often occur where there are only one or two employees, and there can be no reason why these should not be open to the same inspection as the rest.

It is clear, however, in view of the startling differences in the conditions and hours of female workers which prevail in different Provinces, and even in different places and industries in the same Province, that the only effectual way to secure healthy conditions for all alike is through a Dominion Factory Act, or the best substitute for it possible. To quote once more from the Report of the Royal Labour Commission:—"The protection which is given to manufacturers against outside competition proceeds from the Federal Government and is enjoyed by all in common, and equally all should be placed on the same footing in the matter of restriction. It must also be considered that the proper enforcement of Factory legislation is too expensive to be resorted to by the smaller Provinces, which do not contain a large proportion of factory labour. These beneficial provisions would therefore, in all probability, be confined for a considerable period to a small portion of the Dominion. In view of all these circumstances, we would strongly urge the desirability of a Dominion Factory Act, wherein uniformity of laws can be obtained. If there be a doubt as to the powers of the Federal Government in the premises, there ought to be a way of removing that doubt. The absolute necessity which exists

*A few of the instances cited in the Royal Commission's Report may be given here:—In Germany, the workmen in mines attained their *maximum* production with *eight* hours of effective work. The proprietor of the glass works near Dusseldorf, having reduced from ten and eleven hours to eight hours, the work of his men, there was soon produced as much in the shortened as in the longer day. In the textile industry, the manufacturers, who have reduced the day of work from twelve to eleven hours in times of crisis, so as not to increase too much their stock, have attained, in a short time, the same production in eleven hours as in twelve. At Manchester in the cotton industry, the production was greater in quantity with fifty-six hours per week, than at Mulhouse, with seventy-two hours, on the same machines.