

almost any other country, and observe the quality and influence of its state-taught religion.

That, other things being equal, the average mechanic or labourer will do as much work in an eight-hour as in a ten-hour day has sometimes been asserted, but the assertion has generally been made by some enthusiastic social reformer, and has usually been met by the hard-headed matter-of-fact employer, or other practical man, with an incredulous smile, or a contemptuous interjection. It remained for a large and liberal-minded English manufacturing firm to put the matter to the test of actual experiment. Most of our readers have probably noticed the remarkable report which was made public a few weeks since by Mr. William Mather, M.P., upon a year's trial of the forty-eight hour week, at the Salford Iron Works. This great establishment of Messrs. Mather & Platt employs about 1,200 men, in a great variety of trades connected with the manufacture of articles in iron, copper, brass, tin, etc., for engineering and other purposes. A better opportunity for trying such an experiment on a large and comprehensive scale could scarcely be wished for. The result, in brief, at a time of almost universal depression, was as follows: On the one article of wages alone, there was an increase in proportion to the amount of work done, as measured by the standard of money value, of four-tenths of one per cent. This slight increase was found as the result of a comparison of the labour outlay for the year with the average of six preceding years. But, as was no doubt foreseen, this loss is fully balanced by the saving effected in such expenditures as those for lighting, fuel, lubricants, miscellaneous stores, and wear and tear of machinery. Thus the problem is solved, and solved so entirely to the satisfaction of the firm that they have, without hesitation, resolved to continue the eight-hour system permanently in their establishment. That such a report should bear immediate fruit was a matter of course. The British Government is the first, or among the first, to fall into line. Mr. Asquith has announced that in the War Office and in the Government dock yards, where ten hours and sometimes more have been the rule, in a very short time no man will be required to work longer than eight hours a day, or forty-eight hours a week.

The philosophy of what might seem at first thought a strange phenomenon, is not far to seek, especially by anyone who has observed the languid, lifeless movements of a labourer working breakfastless in the early morning hours, or when bowed down with fatigue towards the close of a ten or eleven-hour day's toil, compared with the alert, energetic execution of a fresh, vigorous recruit. This philosophy was well explained by Mr. Asquith, in the speech referred to. Advocating short hours, he said:

By short hours I am not speaking of anything excessive or extreme, nor am I laying down any hard or fast rule as applicable to all employments; but as short hours I take as a sample the general kind of average what is now called the eight-hour day, which represents, according to the experience of those who have tried them, the maximum time during which the human being, regarded as a productive machine, can carry on his efforts and energies for the best possible advantage both to himself and the community. We felt that to be the case; and finding, as we did, in these various Government departments that men were working sometimes for ten hours and sometimes for more than ten hours—working, that is to say, as we believe, for a length of time which was inconsistent with the production of the largest amount of work, and which was still more injurious to their interests and to their moral and social requirements as human and civilized beings—we have reduced the hours of labour, and in the Government departments at the present moment, in the War Office, and in the Government dockyards very shortly, no men will be employed for a longer time than an average of eight hours a day, or something like forty-eight hours a week. I anticipate, and those who are more closely conversant with the circumstances of the particular case than I am are perfectly confident that that result, allowing as it does the workmen to enjoy home life, to enjoy social life, to enjoy the more refined pleasures of literature and culture, for so many hours in each day and in each week, will not be found inconsistent with the interest of the taxpayer, because the taxpayer will get quite as much and probably more for his money than he ever did before.

It is to be noted, however, that in one respect the very success of the experiment defeats one of the arguments which have been most strongly urged on behalf of the eight-hour day, viz., that its adoption would, by lessening the production of a given number of employees without lessening their wages, increase the available employment in the same ratio, and thus create employment for a large additional number of men.

#### THE TARIFF DEBATE.

Was the prolonged tariff debate, which ended on Thursday of last week, of any service to the country? Of course the result, so far as the voting in the House is concerned, was a foregone conclusion. Probably not a single vote was changed by the discussion. But it would be a rash conclusion that, therefore, the discussion was a waste of time. Far from it. The subject, not only in view of the effects of the tariff, for good or evil, upon the business and industries of the country during the next few years, but also in view of the far-reaching importance of the economic principles involved, in their bearing upon further legislation and policy, is one of the very first importance. If on any subject that can be mentioned it is worth while for our legislators and the people to have the *pros* and *cons* distinctly stated and argued, it is so with regard to our fiscal policy. It can

hardly be doubted that in the process of studying and thinking upon the question, in the search for arguments, many of the members of the House gained clearer views and fuller information than ever before. Beyond the precincts of the Chamber, too, throughout the length and breadth of the land, the people were sitting as a great jury and listening, it is safe to say, as they have seldom listened to a Parliamentary debate. It was evident, as some of the speakers did not hesitate to avow, that much of the oratory was intended more for the ears of the electors in the constituencies than for those of fellow-Parliamentarians. There is reason to fear, it is true, that the discussion lacked the essential element of an ideal debate—minds open to conviction and intent only on the truth. The party system is, unhappily, fatal to such a state of mind, in the case of the great majority. But the same defect is to be found in the arguments in our courts of law, in our ecclesiastical controversies, and in every other field of discussion. One sometimes queries whether the long-sought differentiating quality of the genus *homo* may not be found in the dominance of the party spirit. It is a natural, we are not sure whether a safe, inference that the truth usually lies between the extremes, and may be approximately reached by striking a balance.

In attempting to analyze the contents of the discussion, it will be found most convenient to arrange the views expressed under three general heads. There were the out-and-out Protectionists, the out-and-out Freetraders, and a large class of moderates lying between the two extremes, though not often occupying the middle ground, but so far verging towards one extreme or the other as to make it clear on which side they would be found in the division.

Judged by the first half of his speech the Minister of Finance might be placed at the head of the list of pure protectionists, but his practice, as exhibited in the amended tariff, deviates so widely from his theory that he cannot consistently take his place there. Mr. McLean and not more than one or two others had the courage to put themselves on record as consistent protectionists. At least they alone showed the courage of their convictions. Certainly their position is logical. If there is no wrong in Governmental interference with the liberty of the citizen to buy and sell in the markets which best suit him; if it is the right and duty of the Government to regulate the matter by legislation; if the best interests of all concerned and the prosperity and progress of the country would be promoted by a law compelling the farmer, for instance, to pay \$100 for a reaper made in the country, when he could procure one just as good from another country for \$90, why not, by all means, have the thing done thoroughly? If the ten-dollar discrimination is needed to effect the complete result and ensure the exclusive use of the home-made article, why